

BV 4915

.D9

Copy 2

Recd 2 Aug^r 1830.

1-11-2

Library of Congress.

Chap. BV 4915

Shelf 1. 79

Copyright No. Copy 2

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







A
SCRIPTURAL ANSWER

TO THE


QUESTION,

HOW MAY I KNOW

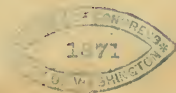
THAT I AM

AN ADOPTED CHILD OF GOD?


BY NATHANIEL DWIGHT.



NORWICH:
PRINTED BY J. DUNHAM.
1830.



BV4915

.II9

Copy 2

District of Connecticut, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-first day of April, in the fifty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, NATHANIEL DWIGHT, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit: "A SCRIPTURAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, HOW MAY I KNOW THAT I AM AN ADOPTED CHILD OF GOD"—in conformity to the act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned."—And also to the act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

CHARLES A. INGERSOLL,

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

A true copy of record, examined and sealed by me,

CHARLES A. INGERSOLL,

Clerk of the District of Connecticut.

706

RECOMMENDATIONS.



The subscribers have read a part of the manuscript of an essay by Dr. Nathaniel Dwight, on the Question, "How may I know that I am an adopted child of God?"—So far as we have examined, the sentiments are Scriptural, and fitted to produce a good impression. The plan is, so far as we know, new, and many of the topics discussed, such as have not hitherto received that attention which their importance demands. We regard the essay, as containing much that is fitted to be very useful to Christians, and to others; and think its publication, for these reasons, very desirable. Amid the activity of the age, there is danger that experimental religion may, in some measure, be overlooked, and essays like this, are peculiarly necessary to check such a result.

J. HAWES,
H. HOOKER,
SAMUEL SPRING,
C. J. TENNY,
SAMUEL H. RIDDELL.

PREFACE.

In offering this small work to the Christian Public, two principal motives have influenced me: **FIRST**, To aid real Christians in removing doubts which they are wont to indulge respecting their true character, and filial relation to God—and **SECOND**, To benefit myself, so far as its avails may contribute pecuniary aid for my subsistence.

I have not sought for embellishment of style; but rather for plainness, that the reader may, with ease, understand the meaning of what he is perusing, as he passes on, without a necessity for turning back, to see the connection of the first with the latter part of a sentence. The task just mentioned, is one to which readers of not a few modern works are subjected, by reason of verbiage, a redundant use of terms, and an artificial involution of sentences.—My wish is, to convey instruction in a plain and simple style, easily understood.

I will close this brief Preface, with expressing a hope, that the reader's desires and expectation, which the title may have excited, will not be disappointed.

NORWICH, MARCH 1830.

**“HOW MAY I KNOW THAT I AM AN ADOPTED
CHILD OF GOD?”**

This question has been asked by thousands of people who are now living ; and by an immensely greater number who have gone into eternity. With the latter, there no longer remains any doubt. The question, as it regards them, is decided forever. But, with those who yet live, more or less uncertainty remains ; and, if they are indeed children of God, this uncertainty, not only prevents them from enjoying the consolation, which an assurance of their adoption would afford, but, also, causes them much distressing anxiety, lest their hope should finally prove a delusion.

To these, a Rule by which they may obtain a correct answer to this interesting and important question, will appear invaluable. But, to whom is this question of such immense importance? In truth, to every person living. But who *realize* it to be so important? I ask this question, because the greatest part of mankind appear, by their conduct, to take but little interest in it, if any at all. It is true—much too true, that a large pro-

portion of mankind, evidently, feel but very little interested in this enquiry. There are two classes of persons, however, by whom it is *realized* to be *interesting*, in the highest possible degree: these are Sinners, who are *specially awakened*, and deeply convinced by the Holy Spirit, that they are sinners—condemned to endure the wrath of God in endless duration; and weak, faint-hearted Christians, who, like the Prodigal, having wandered away from their Father's house, where they have once been admitted, are lost in a wilderness, and are in danger of perishing; and who, remembering how it was with them, when at home, wish to return again to their Father, but can find no way which will conduct them back to His house. There are many, of both classes, now living. They, and they only, *know* this question to be thus interesting and important; and they *know* it, because they *feel* it to be so. The knowledge of this fact is not attained by reading, by hearing, nor by speculating, and philosophizing; but it is learned and realized, by experimental feeling only.

There are many, now living, and there have been many more, who once ridiculed the fact comprised in this assertion—who have called it enthusiasm, and a delusion of weak and bewildered minds—of minds which had discarded the guidance of Reason and Common Sense; and thrown the reins loose upon the neck of an excited Imagination. Many such persons have themselves afterwards been awakened, by the Spirit of

God, to see and *experimentally to feel* this very truth ; and then, they have been quick to confess their former blindness, and their great sin, in ridiculing the work of the Holy Spirit—to acknowledge the truth to be such as others, whom they once ridiculed, have declared it ; and to cry, with earnest and deep solicitude unto God, for pardon.

But sinners, who have never been awakened in this special manner—who have never experienced a spiritual conviction of their own sinful character and condition—who have never *felt* that they are already tried, and condemned as rebels against God ; and have never realized their imminent danger of perishing in their sins—such sinners *know not*, in reality, *any thing* of the importance of this question. And, if they continue unawakened, and without any special conviction, they never will *really know* its importance, until they learn it in the eternal world. They will then *know*, because they will *feel* all its importance. But their knowledge can then do them no good. Then, indeed, there will remain *no doubt* about the question, as it respects themselves. It will be settled forever, that they are not the adopted children of God. And, oh ! the despair with which this knowledge will then overwhelm them !

The only time in which this question can be examined by mankind, with any advantage, is, this present life. *In this world*, man is a probationer for Heaven, or Hell. Having sinned, even once only, he is con-

demned ; and is a certain heir of hell. That is his sure allotment, if he continues as he is. But, by the mercy of God, he is, under the Gospel, rendered a probationer for Heaven. Every sinner may go to heaven, *if he will* ; and whoever does not go there, and be happy forever, will fail, only because *he will not go to heaven, but will go to hell*. I have said, that every person, who has sinned, (and who has not?) *is condemned to hell already—even now* ; and has been, from the moment in which he committed his *first sin*. But God *offers* him a pardon—a free and full pardon, on his complying with certain *conditions*. He is now, in this life, on his probation, that it may be seen whether *he will comply with those conditions, or not*. These, God assures him, are the *only* conditions He will ever propose to him. This life, He tells him, is the only opportunity He will ever give him, for complying with them. If he does not comply with them now, whenever he dies, the sentence of condemnation, which is already passed upon him, for the sins he has committed, *will immediately be executed*, with all its terrors, without any reprieve, or mitigation.

Experience and the Word of God both concur in testifying, that man *will not comply with these conditions*, unless he is moved and persuaded by a power which he does not naturally possess ; because all the power which he exerts, in his natural state of sin, is directly in opposition to such a compliance. Left to him-

self, therefore, *he will continue* to disbelieve that God is in earnest, and will go on in his rebellion. This every sinner does, in fact, while he is left to his own choice. Hence, in order that any sinner should ever become an adopted Child of God, there must, necessarily, be *some other influence exerted in him*, to make him *feel*, and therefore *believe*, that *God is really in earnest* in what He says—to make him *feel that he is a sinner, already condemned*—that he is in danger, and, *if he dies in his present condition, absolutely certain of perishing in impenitence*. The influence, which is so indispensably necessary in order to produce these convictions in the unawakened sinner's mind, is the *special influence of the Holy Spirit*. It is by means of this special influence, therefore, that any individual of the human race does ever, in this world, come to *consider and realize truly*, the infinite importance of *ascertaining* that he is an adopted Child of God. It is necessary that this influence should be exerted, *effectually*, in this manner, to *awaken* him to a correct sense of his condition—because he is utterly insensible to it, in his natural state. It is equally necessary that it convince him that such is really his condition, *by making him feel it*; because he does not believe that it is such, and never will, in this world, unless he is convinced by *experimentally* feeling it. This awakening and conviction, are both indispensable *prerequisites* to his repentance; and these no man ever did, or ever will produce on his own

feelings, *by his own reasoning and reflections*. He never will *cause himself* to feel, that he is *now* a condemned sinner, according to the reality of his case, as viewed by God. He never will *cause himself to feel*, that God is *now angry with him*; and is continually more and more so every day—*because he daily refuses to obey the command which makes it his duty to repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Unless he does become thus convinced, by *feeling the truth*, he never will either repent, or believe. Consequently, he will *die condemned*, as he now is, and perish. But the Holy Spirit, by exercising *His special* influence on any sinner, can produce this realizing conviction in his mind. This He does, whenever He pleases thus to exercise His influence. And then, *that* sinner, and every other such, will know, in his own experience, that the special influence of the Holy Spirit, operating to convince him of sin, in a sense he never before realized, is not a delusion, but a most solemn reality, of infinite importance to his soul.

Several reasons might be mentioned, why men feel it to be of such immense importance to *know* that they are the adopted children of God. But they may all be resolved into one or two.

1st. The absolute certainty, which they feel, that their own deliverance from endless suffering, and their enjoyment of endless happiness, after they leave this world, depend on the fact. These future retributions

they know are realities, exactly as represented by the declarations of Christ, in the New Testament. They know this, *because they feel it to be true*. "They have the witness in themselves." I have no fear that this position will be disputed, by any person who has been *thoroughly convinced* that he is a sinner, by the Spirit of God.

2d. The Christian realizes, that the assurance of his being an adopted child of God, would furnish him with a solid and enduring consolation, in all situations and circumstances of life. This is another reason, why he deems it immensely important. This no one realizes, except he who feels the danger to which he is exposed, whilst he remains under the sentence of condemnation, by the law of God. And, exactly in proportion as he realizes this, will he prize the consolation to be derived from a certain knowledge that he is an adopted child of God.

It is undoubtedly true, that an adopted child of God *may know* that he is one. If it were otherwise, every attempt to answer the question, "How, and by what means, this may be known," would, of course, be vain. It may not be superfluous to say, in this place, that the phrases A Christian, a Saint, and an Adopted Child of God, *mean the same character*; and that, in this Essay, the terms will be employed as synonymous.

A person cannot know that he is an adopted child of God, unless he is really such. Before I can be assured

that I am a Christian, it is indispensable that I should be a Christian. It is impossible that I should find real evidence that I am an adopted child of God, unless I possess that in my character, belonging to that relation. But the enquiry before us, an answer to which is sought by very many, with the greatest solicitude, supposes that a person may be a child of God, and yet, not be sure of the fact. This is, undoubtedly, true, however strange, at first view, it may appear.

There are many persons of adult years, who have enjoyed all the privileges conferred by education ; by the ordinances of the Gospel, and the “outward and ordinary means” of religious instruction—who, nevertheless, *know* nothing—yea, *absolutely nothing*, of the importance of this enquiry, as it applies to themselves. It is learned, *in all cases*, by experience only. Of this experience they are destitute—so much so, that they cannot be made to feel that it is a reality. When others, who have learned from their own experience, declare its truth to them ; although they will not, *in any other case*, refuse to believe their testimony, in this, they will disbelieve it altogether. Or, if they give them credit for their veracity, they will think they are under the influence of a *delusion on this subject*. This is a singular fact : yet it is a fact. But it is not for want of *credible* evidence, that any disbelieve in the reality of religious anxiety and conviction. For this abounds in the bible, and in the declarations of individual wit-

nesses, without number, who have lived in different and distinct countries ; who have lived and died strangers to each other ; and who, therefore, could not possibly have concerted to deceive. It cannot be because there is any *special reason* for disbelieving their testimony, which is peculiar to this case.

A Convicted Sinner always feels more, or *less* mental distress, until he discovers some ground, on which he builds a hope of deliverance from that evil which he *is assured* awaits him, while in a state of impenitence. This distress, which is sometimes increased to a great degree of anguish, is entirely *mental*. It is, it can be known, only by *personal experience*. It may be illustrated, in this respect, by that distress which is felt for the loss of beloved friends. It is known, only, by a personal experience. It is entirely mental. A person who has never been called to experience it, cannot know any thing of its *nature*, or *reality*. Now if I know either of these kinds of distress, by personal experience, I can give to another person as good, and as *conclusive, evidence of the one*, as of the other. In both cases the evidence is *the same in kind*. In one case, he will believe my testimony, without hesitation. In the other, he will not believe it at all. He may *admit* that I really think it is, as I say. He may, very charitably, give me credit for sincerity. But that is the utmost he will allow.

I had observed this fact, in many different instances,

and had long noticed its inconsistency ; before I knew how to account for it. It appeared unaccountable that a sensible man would, in one case, give me full credit ; would, without hesitation, believe that the fact was, as I asserted ; when all the proof I could give him, was my own declaration—and, in an other instance, where a different fact was asserted, exactly of the same nature, in all other respects, he would entirely withhold his belief. This was, in my view, very strange indeed. Nor was I able to solve the difficulty till after much investigation. At length I saw, however, that his belief in the Special Conviction of Sin, was not withheld because such conviction was a thing *incredible or impossible* in its nature—nor for the want of *sufficient evidence* of its existence : But because he felt that if he had allowed himself to be persuaded that such conviction of sin is a reality, he must also acknowledge and feel his own situation to be most dangerous and alarming. HE was sensible that he knew nothing of it, in his own experience ; and, if he should admit it to be a reality—the necessity for his becoming a subject of it himself in order to be saved, the *total uncertainty whether he ever would* ; and the inevitable consequences that must result, *if he did not*, and if he did not also become regenerated ; were so dreadful to his apprehension, that he would reject my testimony without any reason whatever, rather than encounter such consequences of admitting it to be a reality. The instances which fully sustain this position, have been

very numerous. Many individuals, who, in one part of their lives, have treated "Religious Awakenings, Special Conviction of Sin, and Conversion of the Soul to God, as all idle and visionary delusion;" who have cast on them a full measure of ridicule and reproach, and have treated them with scoffing and impious levity; have, afterwards, been awakened themselves, convinced of sin, and made to experience "the Love of God shed abroad in their hearts"—in such a manner as evinced the Spiritual Regeneration and Conversion of their souls to God. These persons have been the first to confess their own sin, shame, and folly, in refusing to credit the testimony of others, on the subject of experimental religion. Indeed, they have admitted, that they neither did, nor could so wholly disbelieve it, as to prevent a fear of its truth; which was sufficient, in many instances, to cause them much disquietude. They have blessed God, and they will bless Him forever and ever, for His having graciously awakened them, and made them *assuredly* to *know* the truth in their own experience. It is learned in no other way. It can be learned by no other means. Yet it may be learned by any and every sinner, immediately; and all its blessed consequences may be ensured to him, as his own privilege, if he will *give his attention, adequately*, to the attainment of it.

If a Sinner is convinced that there is such a thing as Conviction of Sin, in a special sense: if he is convinced

that there is such a thing as Regeneration, or, in other words, a new Spiritual birth, and that he must be born again, if he would escape eternal misery, and secure eternal happiness beyond the grave, although he knows not these things in his own experience—yet we have the declaration of God, that he can attain to the knowledge of them, if he will *adequately* seek for it. This testimony, no Christian will discredit. [It is contained in the 2d chapter of Proverbs, from the 1st verse to the 5th, inclusive.] Here “Wisdom,” “Knowledge,” and “Understanding,” mean the whole of the Christian religion; and the promise, made to those who seek for them, as men seek for “Silver,” or “Hid Treasure,” is sure. *They shall find what they do thus seek for.* We all know, that men of the world seek for wealth, in serious earnest—“with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind.”

I have said, that a Child of God may certainly *know* that he is such. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” The person who “knows that he has passed from death unto life,” also *knows*, that he is an adopted child of God. For none others “have passed from death unto life.” All others, without an exception, are in spiritual death, *even until now.* “*They are dead in sin.*” And, unless, *in this life*, which is their only time of probation, they are “born again,” and thus become “children of God,” by His gracious adoption, they will re-

main in that condition—they will die, and go out of the world, in that condition ; and, in the eternal world, they will experience all those dreadful consequences of dying in sin, which God has revealed in His Word. A man's *not having believed* that God ever revealed His determinations on this subject—or, his having *perverted* what God has revealed, and confirmed himself in a belief opposite to the truth, will make it no better for him, when he comes to realize the fact, in his own sufferings. All who die in sin, *will realize it*, in hopeless despair. Probably the infatuation of careless sinners—that “madness,” which Solomon declares “is in their hearts whilst they live,” is never more clearly manifested, than in withstanding the abundant testimony which proves the special influence of the Spirit of God, exerted in awakening the sinner ; in convincing him of sin, and converting his soul unto holiness, and spiritual life ; as this doctrine is maintained by those who are advocates for Revivals of religion. I do not intend to insist on it largely, in this place ; yet I request the reader's attention to it, in a few considerations.

First. These effects are in perfect correspondence with what our Saviour said, should be the work of the Holy Ghost, when He should come into the world, after His ascension to His Father. “When He is come, He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” Such *was* the effect of the Holy

Spirit's influence, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to the multitude, and more than three thousand were immediately converted. It could not mean the miraculous effects wrought in the Apostles; for none of those converts partook of these effects until after they had been awakened, and convinced of their sin, in crucifying Christ. They partook of no miraculous powers, till they were pricked in their hearts, and were led, in great anxiety, to enquire of the Apostles, in view of their dreadful guilt, and danger, "What shall we do?" This pricking in their hearts, which they then felt, *for the first time in their lives*, was a special conviction of their own sin: A sense of their awful danger, which this caused them to feel, as soon as they realized it, was the immediate cause of their deep solicitude. It was this sense of danger, which made them enquire, with deep anxiety, what they must do to obtain deliverance from it. The conferring of miraculous powers on many of them, was an event which took place subsequently, and was a very different thing from this *conviction of sin*. It was not, however, the sin of condemning and crucifying the Son of God, merely, of which the Holy Spirit convinced these men; nor was this conviction of sin confined to the Jews alone. The same effect was produced among the heathen, in all the countries whither the early preachers of the Gospel went. In all those places, "there was a division among the people," produced by the instru-

mentality of their preaching. All who believed their testimony, and became converts to Christ, were awakened; convinced of their own sins; and converted, by the special power and influence of the Holy Spirit. The others, who attended, heard the same truths urged on *them*, by the same preachers, and at the same time—yet nothing of this kind was wrought *in them*; and they continued unbelieving, and unconverted.—There was a *cause* for this difference. What was it?

Secondly. The testimony of good men, during many centuries, concerning the influences of the Holy Spirit, in awakening and convicting sinners, concurs with the testimony of the Apostles, in all the essential particulars. This testimony is found, in abundance, in the writings of Ministers, and Civilians, who have lived in different ages; and in almost all the countries, where the Gospel has been preached. It is the same sort of testimony that is *now given*, in the United States, by many thousands of individuals, of every grade of intellectual strength, and cultivation of mind. It is not limited to one denomination of Christians, only; but is found among all, who attend on the preaching of the same doctrines which the Apostles preached. Thus God vindicates and blesses His own truth, by whomsoever it is preached.

Thirdly. The doctrine is attested now, and has been, in past ages, by numbers of men, who once decried, and denounced it, as heartily as any others ever did.

But *they were made to FEEL it in themselves* ; and that, at once, removed all their disbelief, and put to silence all their scoffing, and reproaches. And these are not weak and ignorant men, as the opposers of the truth gratuitously, and not very modestly, assert is the fact, with believers in these special influences, generally. There is, however, but one *effectual* and *certain* cure, for this disbelief ; which no external evidence can remove from the minds of men. It is found in *their own experience*. Let any man *feel* the effects of a special divine influence, and every doubt about its reality, and all his disbelief, of its being the special influence of the Holy Spirit, will vanish at once. He will then “have the witness in himself:” and it will appear to him to be a witness, whose veracity he has no inclination to dispute. He will then find, that he has a much more important interest to secure, by believing this doctrine, than by denying it. This *has been* the fact with many, who once opposed, and reproached, and ridiculed the subject, as much as Unitarians, and Universalists, and Infidels do now ; and, who claimed for themselves a superiority of intellect, and learning, as confidently, as if it were really a fact, that, in all these particulars, they were thus superior to other men.— Yet, even the testimony of *such converts*, will not convince any one of those who oppose themselves. Nor will any other evidence, beside that special operation of the Spirit on their hearts, the reality of which they de-

ny. The idea that God, who is angry with sinners, acts as a Sovereign, in bestowing His saving grace on whom He will; that those, on whom he *does not* bestow it, will persist in their rebellion, and certainly perish—and, that this will be *their own fault, exclusively*, excites such bitter opposition in the sinner's heart, that he *will resist every proof*, which shows it to be a doctrine of the Gospel. This rebellious feeling is much enhanced, by the considerations, that the power of God is infinite—that the sufferings of the outcasts are *literally endless*—and that *all will not* be brought by God into a state of salvation. The necessity, and at the same time the uncertainty, of a divine influence upon his heart, when viewed as rendering eternal destruction a possible result of his existence, is a doctrine too appalling to be contemplated, with the least approbation; and, whenever it is set before him, he will resist the truth, and, probably, hate the minister who faithfully declares it. Now all these feelings are utterly wrong; and they are predicated on wrong views, and *perverse apprehensions* of the truth, respecting himself; respecting others; and respecting God.

First. Respecting himself. He has no *correct* conceptions respecting himself, as a sinner in rebellion against God. He *feels*, as though *sin* were a *small evil*, in itself—as though he were not very sinful; and, as though all sin were confined to outward *acts* of transgression. He persuades himself, therefore, that *he has*

never done any thing very heinous. He is ready to think, he has done rather more good than evil. He *feels* as though God must bestow his favor—the special influence of his spirit—on christians, if He does it all, for the sake of their *comparative goodness*; and he concludes, that he is, *at least, as good as they*, and probably better than many, who, according to this scheme, are adopted by God, as his children. Therefore, he concludes that *such* a rule of acting, makes God a partial being; and he thinks himself hardly dealt with “if this is true.”

Secondly. He has wrong views with respect to others. If it is indeed true, that God does bestow his special grace on others, whereby he makes them heirs of salvation, he thinks it must be on account of *something good* that God sees in them. And he doubts not that *he deserves it at the hands of God, as much as they*. Therefore, he concludes that they are *avored through partiality*, while he is *unreasonably rejected*. He does not realize that neither he nor they *deserve the favor*—nor does he reflect that God has *offered it to him*, and urged him to accept it, all his life, while he has uniformly refused it, *and that this is the only reason* why he does not enjoy evidence of his adoption, at this moment. He does not *realize*, that God does him no injustice, in constraining others to partake of that blessing, by making them willing, *contrary to their natural inclination*, to accept the salvation, which he freely offers to him—and that he only leaves him to pursue the way of his own

choice, after giving him countless warnings of the consequences. All his views of *Gospel truth*, are perverted; and they will continue so, unless he awakes to attend to it: *to examine it*, more seriously than he has hitherto done. And this *he never will do*, unless the Spirit of God graciously influence him to it.

Thirdly. Sinners have wrong apprehensions on this subject, *as it respects God*. They do not possess an abiding conviction, within themselves, that God is perpetually present with them, and that he is an attentive witness of all their *conduct*:—much less, that he is a searcher of their thoughts, and that he will call them to a strict account for every one of them. They have wrong views of the *rule* by which God judges men. So far as they have any definite idea, on this subject, it is, that he judges of men by their *external conduct* only. Did such persons derive their views, *correctly*, from the Bible, they would realize, “that God looketh on the heart,” and determine from a knowledge of their hearts, what their characters are.

They think, in their hearts, that God views sin as a very different thing from what he has declared it to be. They think, that if their *conduct* proves beneficial to man, the *motives* from which they have acted, as it regards God, are of little importance. But God esteems them as *all-important*. O, how blind sinners are!—They seem to think that sin, *even in God's estimation*, is a small evil—a mere trifle; and that the punishment,

threatened against impenitent sinners, as christians represent it, is altogether disproportioned to the evil they have committed. Though these threatenings *appear in the Bible*, in plain language, and, if construed literally, are inconceivably awful—yet, sin, *in their esteem*, being a small offence, they will view them as being given in the language of hyperbole—or as figurative, in accordance with the style in use, in the Eastern nations, when the Bible was written—or, *any thing else*, but literal. Now God means *exactly* what he speaks; and, were these people once to *feel* that conviction of sin, which is effected by the *special influence* of the Holy Spirit, they would then *know*, that all their views on this subject have been wrong; and that God means exactly, and literally, what he says; and they would understand (because they would feel it) that “God *is* angry with the wicked every day.” He would, from that moment, be no longer “The Unknown God” to them, as He had been hitherto. But, where shall I stop, when mentioning the erroneous apprehensions, concerning God, which are entertained by impenitent sinners? Their apprehensions respecting His Existence—His Holiness, Justice, Truth, Mercy, Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotence, are all wrong. And this is not the result of a want of evidence, concerning any of the divine attributes, and perfections. The evidence which God has given is ample, and complete. But it is because sinners *dislike* the subject—*partially* investigate

it—and, by reason of their unbelief of heart, pervert what they do examine; and for this reason only—because they hate that which condemns themselves.—They see that it does condemn them, just in proportion as they examine it; and, therefore, because it *proves* that all “their deeds are evil,” they hate it, and cast it from them.

Now, nothing will fully correct these erroneous views, which sinners have of *themselves*, of *others*, and of *God*, but the special influence of the “Holy Spirit, convincing them *concerning sin; concerning righteousness; and concerning judgment.*” This will do it effectually. It seems that our Lord had reference to this identical truth, when He gave to His disciples that blessed promise, that He would send the Comforter to them, when He ascended to the Father. For, if the world of mankind, in their fallen condition, could be convinced concerning these truths, by any other agent, why was it necessary that the Holy Ghost should be employed in effecting it? That He was employed in doing it, in a manner different from other agents, and, in some sense, *peculiar*, appears to be a necessary inference from the nature of the promise, and the circumstances in which it was made. And I may venture to say, that every sinner, who has been made a subject of the promised conviction, whatever his previous sentiments may have been, has become persuaded, that this is the *only correct* view of the subject. When he was awakened, he

saw that he had been asleep, and insensible to his real condition, till then. When he was convinced concerning *Sin*, he then saw, for the first time in his life, that he had had no *right* views respecting the *nature*, the *extent*, and the *moral evil* of sin, or respecting himself, as a sinner. And, that then existed the first correct apprehension he ever had of the righteousness of God, in the moral government of the world, and in the condemnation of sinners—and that his opinions respecting the final judgment of mankind, as well as his own rule for judging himself, and his fellow men—had all been wilfully erroneous. He then *began* to see.

Now, if these observations are correct, according to the testimony of God, in His Word, we are prepared to establish one conclusion—*That every person, who knows nothing respecting this Special Influence of the Holy Spirit, in his own experience, is yet in his sins—is destitute of sanctification—and is an impenitent sinner. He is not an adopted Child of God.* He is under the law, for his justification, “and not under grace.” “He is condemned already,” “because he does not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, to the salvation of his soul.” But there may be, and probably are those, who have known something of the Special Awakening and Convincing influence of the Holy Spirit, who, notwithstanding, are not the adopted children of God; because they were never “born of the spirit of God.” It is not true, that every sinner,

who is specially awakened, and "convinced of sin," by the Holy Spirit, throws down his rebellion; submits to God; and becomes reconciled to Him. It is probable, that the number of persons, in a season of revival, is not small, who are awakened and convinced, but proceed *no farther*. They seem to stand, for a considerable time, on the line of separation between the two classes—but still, do not pass over from the enemy, to the Lord's side. The Spirit strives with them for a season. They halt between two opinions; and while they hesitate, the Spirit, being grieved by their obstinacy, withdraws, and leaves them still *in the world*—"in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity." "They have neither part, nor lot with Christ," because they are not "born again." "Their hearts," remaining unrenewed, "are not right in the sight of God." These persons are in peculiar danger of deceiving themselves, *fatally*. They are prone to indulge a favorable hope for themselves, on *unscriptural grounds*; and the great adversary of their souls is ever ready to help them into a state of fatal delusion. After the serious alarm they have felt, they naturally wish to escape from the danger they have so clearly apprehended. Having been informed, that the evidences of regeneration are not *uniform in all cases*; and that sometimes they are not perfectly clear, when there are still strong reasons for believing that the change has taken place, they are liable, in looking for a hope, the object of their strongest

desire, to persuade themselves that they have *some sure evidence* in their favor, though it is not so clear as they could wish. They hope it will grow brighter by and by; they embrace it; and conclude that they are in a safe condition. Persons of this class are often *anxious to know* whether they are in truth adopted children of God. At other times, they assume a strong confidence that they are—and, in proof of it, are ready to relate “an experience, which they had several years ago.” On this they seem to rest, in perfect security, “being persuaded that He who has *begun* a good work in them, *will perform* it until the day of Jesus Christ.” They flatter themselves that a good work *was begun* in them, some fifteen, or twenty years ago; but they forbear to search diligently and faithfully, for “growth in grace.” For every *real* scriptural evidence of being a true Christian, they can find a *counterfeit* substitute, in their own favor. And thus, while they live evidently “without God in the world,” “they settle down on their lees,” and feel as though “they were delivered to do these things.”

Such persons are in imminent danger of clinging to the false hope they have embraced, and never learning their delusion, until they realize it in the light of Eternity; when it will be impossible to avoid its fatal consequences. It is most desirable that they should be induced to examine themselves *honestly* and *thoroughly*: but this is hardly to be expected—because their

first impulse, when the duty is proposed to them, is a fear, that if they do, they shall find that they are in an *unsafe condition*. The very reason, which *should* urge them to a faithful performance of this duty, occasions their neglect of it. The probability, therefore, is, that they will persist in their delusion, and help to increase the multitude, who will say unto Christ, at the great day, "Lord! Lord! open unto us. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;" and will receive from Him the reply, "I know you not—depart!" Then their endless despair will begin.

But there is another class of people, who make this great enquiry, with a feeling of deep solicitude; and with a sincere desire to have it truly answered, with respect to themselves. They well know that they are liable to be deceived; and that if they are deceived, all their hope of yet becoming children of God, by adoption, depends on learning the fact in season, in order that they may seek salvation anew, and become established on the sure foundation. This class consists of those who are really pious, but who live as if in a dying condition—who have back-slidden, and are attempting to do what the Lord has told them they cannot do, viz: to "serve God and Mammon." They are Christians who have but "little faith." They are the adopted children of God, but from their first awakening they

have felt more interested to obtain evidence *that their own salvation is secured*, than in promoting the honor of God, by a constant and uniform obedience to His commandments. Their affections, to a great extent, are fixed on this world, and they are making disproportionate exertions for securing an interest here below.— They have a very little of that fear of God which is the *beginning* of wisdom; but, much of their time, “they walk in darkness, and can see no light.” These persons, although they are the children of God, will often be in doubt respecting the *reality of their relation to Him*.— They have such a truant disposition; they are so ready to leave their home, and associate with strangers; are so attentive to *their own individual* interests, and so much engrossed by them; so regardless of the honor and interests of their Father—that, in order to bring them back to their home, and their duty, it becomes necessary for God, if He will not give them up, and lose them entirely, to chasten them often, and sometimes to scourge them severely. He frowns on them. It may be, they cry to Him, in their distresses; and, for a time, in order to make them feel, by their sufferings, their folly and ingratitude, He delays His help. Then, in their calamity, they begin to doubt whether God is indeed *their* Father; or whether they have not deceived themselves. It is right that children, *so unfaithful*, so wanting in their filial duty and affection, should be kept in doubt respecting their adoption. The fault is

all their own. Like the prodigal son, they left their Father, to see if they could not do *better for themselves*. They might have remained with Him, and then they would have *known* that they were His children. But so long as they will disregard the authority and instructions of their Father; so long as they "give their chief diligence to lay up a treasure" in this world, instead of "making their calling and election sure;" so long as they *live* and *act*, as the unbelieving world around them live and act, insomuch that they give no other evidence of being the children of God, than occasionally assembling around the sacramental table—just so long they may expect to be in doubt whether they have any other relation to God, than that of aliens. While *thus feeling* and *acting*, their chief desire, relative to religion, seems to be to have just enough to feel confident that their deliverance from the threatened sufferings of the impenitent is sure; for then they can be conformed to this world, with a quiet conscience, and give *full scope* to their desires for *accumulating and treasuring up*, as large an earthly heritage as possible.

Now, this whole course of theirs, is forbidden in the Word of God. The prohibitions of it, and the warnings against it, are almost countless. Yet, a very large proportion of professors of religion, and not a small number of *real Christians*, live in this manner, at the present time. A practical disbelief of God's promises to those who are faithful, and a disregard for their own

obligations to Him, lie at the foundation of all their doubts and fears. They are slothful in His service; and, in a great degree, destitute of affection for their brethren "of the household of faith." They dare not trust God to provide for them, and theirs, while they, in obedience to His command, "seek *diligently* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; therefore they disobey Him, and devote *their time, their solicitude, and their exertions*, to secure "wherewithal they shall eat, and drink, and be clothed." Can they *rationally* expect, or *hope to enjoy* the consolations which belong to God's children, while, to such an extent, they disregard their duty to Him, and to their brethren? Follow them to their closets, and see how rarely they even seek after communion with God. Visit their families, at the time of offering the morning and evening sacrifice, (if, indeed, they do pray in their families) and listen to their prayers. Observe them in their dealings—see (if you can see it) how much *less* anxious they are, "to get a good bargain," than to act according to the rule of "doing to others, as they would have others do to them;" and, if you are not yet satisfied, see how much stronger their love for their poor, unfortunate, and suffering brethren is, as manifested in their liberality, than is that which is shown by the world—then, if you find any evidence of their religion—any one badge, peculiar to the children of God, *mark it well*, lest you shall not be able, when called on to do it, "to give a reason for

the hope that is in them." They, surely, cannot give one. If I have a brother, or a sister, whom I profess to love, who has fallen into the infirmities of age, and is suffering, by sickness, or want of the comforts of life, if I do not evince my affection for them, by ministering to their relief, (provided I have it in my power) what will be the opinion of those, who see my conduct, respecting my sincerity? They would think, and they would think correctly, that my affection for them existed only in pretence. In the same manner God views it. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Wherein does the conduct of many Christian professors, in this age, differ from this, in regard to their poor and unfortunate brethren? Do they, *generally, as a people*, manifest any thing, *peculiarly distinguishing them* from the worldly men, who make no pretensions to religion? That there are some, who do, is readily admitted—but are not these exceptions to the generality of professors? and, if so, are we not *justly* reproached by the world? (for the world do reproach us with this very conduct,) and can it be considered strange if God withdraws from us the light of His countenance, and leaves us to feel the unhappy consequences of dishonoring Him; neglecting to regard His precepts; habitually violating our covenant engagements; and withholding our aid from our afflicted brethren, whom, be-

fore God, we have professed that we love with a pure heart, fervently? The great reason why professing Christians so generally "walk in darkness"—oppressed with fears, filled with doubts respecting their adoption, and "all their lifetime subject to bondage, through fear of death," is, the almost constant violation of their covenant with God, through neglect of performing their duty to Him, and to one another, as required, both by the precept and example of Jesus Christ, their acknowledged Lord and Master. If people, under some excitement of their feelings, set out to "make a gain of godliness," they should remember that Simon Magus professed religion on that plan; and, though they may possibly be suffered to proceed in their object, yet, they are not very likely to learn, by their own experience, that "Godliness with *contentment* is great gain," even without an accumulation of great wealth. But the comparative few, who have learned by experience, that, "*In keeping the commandments of God, there is great reward;*" and they "that have respect unto all God's commands," thus "walking surely, because they walk uprightly," are those who "go on their way rejoicing."

From the nature of the case, there can be no reason why any *one*, whom God has adopted as a child, should live, *one day*, ignorant of the fact of his adoption, except such as arises out of his own sloth and unfaithfulness. But far the greatest portion of Christian professors of the present age, must alter their manner of

using the present world, and change their manner of living in it, before they can feel that comforting assurance of their adoption, as children of God, and heirs of the promises, which they so much desire.

Whenever their desires and apparent interests seem to oppose a discharge of their duty, as God requires it at their hands, they must relinquish their own desires and apparent interests, and do what God calls on them to do. They must trust Him to provide for all their real wants, and be willing to spend their time, strength, and acquisitions, as He may please to direct. Then they will have no doubts respecting their relation to Him; nor will He call them to suffer any privation, which shall not result in a greater good to them than all this world could bestow, if they could command it.

In the following Essay, I will endeavor to show all enquirers, How they may know that they are the Adopted Children of God—always premising the fact, that they must, in fact, be His children, in order to their knowing that they are His. The proposition is self-evident, That no person can know the existence of a fact, unless that fact does really exist.

PART II.

CHAP. I.

AWAKENING, CONVICTION AND REGENERATION.

In the preliminary Essay, I have made some observations, with a design to show that Special Awakening, Conviction of Sin, and Regeneration, as they are viewed by those Christians who are called Orthodox, are doctrines taught in the Gospel; and that those who deny and reject them, do not do it for want of sufficient evidence in their favor—but for other reasons, connected with their own personal feelings and prejudices, as sinners. Assuming it now as a fact, that no sinner ever becomes a Christian, or, which is the same thing, an adopted child of God, unless he is awakened, convinced of sin, and regenerated, or “born again,” by the special influences of the Holy Spirit,

I shall, in this chapter, give a summary account of the method which God generally pursues with those sinners, who become His children by a gracious adoption. A general description of this, is all that is necessary for the purpose I have in view—nothing more, therefore, will be attempted. There are some things

which are common to the experience of all renewed persons; while there are other particulars, some belonging to one case, and some to another, which exhibit them, in these respects, under an almost endless variety. These last will not be noticed in this work.— Any attempt to do it, indeed, would be fruitless. But a general description of God's usual method, will not, I apprehend, be difficult to furnish, in a manner sufficiently definite.

It will not be superfluous to remark, in this place, that all men are born into the world with such a nature, that they will sin as soon as they attain to a state of moral agency. They then become practical sinners, by transgressing the Moral Law of God—the law of universal love. By this law they are then condemned; and they can, in no possible way, deliver themselves from condemnation, by any future compliance with the requirements of that law. If rescued at all, it must be by grace. By the grace of God, all who are rescued from condemnation, are made partakers of holiness through regeneration. Being regenerated, they become partakers of the spirit of Christ; and in no other way do they ever become possessed of it. Let us then attempt to show the general method which God takes with all such as become possessed of the spirit of Christ; and who thus attain to the character, and privileges, of his adopted children. “For, if any man have not the spirit

of Christ, he is none of his." The converse of this is equally true, viz: If any man has the spirit of Christ, he is one of his disciples—an adopted child of God; and shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The first step, in this process, is, his being AWAKENED, by the Holy Spirit, in a sense, until then, entirely new to him. He may have read, and heard, of it: he may have seen others who were thus awakened; but he *realized* nothing of it in himself, until he experienced it in his own feelings. He now finds that something is wrong, respecting himself. He is disquieted, and nothing affords him tranquillity, such as he has had before. There is a *something* operating on his feelings, of which he cannot wholly divest himself. It may not be, and very often it is not, long before he advances, from the state of mere awakening to that of

CONVICTION OF SIN. Conviction is not always, equally clear, or powerful. But the sinner is, in all cases, really *convinced* of sin; and that he is a sinner against God, in a manner entirely new, and unknown to him before. He may have *admitted*, before, that he was a sinner, and was guilty. But now *he feels* that he is so, "The witness is in himself." It is not merely an inference, fairly drawn from acknowledged premises. It is an internal monitor, which *is*, and will be, his companion wherever he goes—pointing his alarmed attention, to the law of God, which he is *compelled to realize*, that he has violated; and that he is *guilty, and condemned,*

as a transgressor. It continually admonishes him, to "prepare to meet God," in Judgment. Finding himself thus guilty, and condemned as all transgressors are, to suffer the awful penalty, by which the law of God is sanctioned, unless he may attain to some way of deliverance, he is, of necessity, anxious to know "what he must do to be saved" from his perilous condition. He finds that his own obedience will not contribute in the least degree towards procuring the deliverance which he is in perishing need of. He finds, by an investigation, that his whole life has been sinful, in the view of that God who is to Judge him. He now finds it to be a fact, that during his whole life, he has been sinning against God, *by neglecting to do*, what God has *required of him*, in His Holy law, and by positively violating its righteous prohibitions; and that, for all this, God is *now* angry with him. To him "the commandment has come, and sin has revived." He is, of course, deeply distressed by this view of his condition; and the more deep, and clear, his conviction is, the more deeply is he distressed, in the same proportion.

Although, in different persons, there are many particulars, in which they vary from each other—yet there is a general resemblance in them all; which is all that I shall notice here. Some, it is certain, are much more deeply distressed, than others. With some, the progress of conviction is gradual; while in others, it is sudden, and almost overwhelming. All that preserves them,

from utter despair, is, the merciful hand of God, extended for their protection, though, at the time, it is unperceived by them. Their minds are wholly occupied by their apprehension of the divine anger. But, notwithstanding these, and many other particulars, in which they vary from each other, they are all, ultimately, persuaded of their condemnation; and that they cannot by any act of theirs, escape from it: that they are in the power of God, and cannot avoid it; that he can, and, if he pleases, will, destroy them. After having tried for a time, to deliver themselves, or to prevail with God to deliver them, and give them some token of his acceptance, but all in vain,—they are brought, at length to see and to approve the justice of God in their condemnation and eternal punishment, to give up the strife, and submit to their condition, let it be whatever God may please to appoint for them. They have now yielded themselves into the hands of God. This is called “throwing down their weapons of rebellion.” This is their first act of submission to God, during their whole lives. All before, has been rebellion; and they are now, or soon after this submission, convinced that it is so. It is true that they were, to a great extent, thoughtless in their former rebellion, and they begin to see the reason why this was the case, viz.: that they have been, till they were specially awakened, “dead in sin.” Until then sin had blinded their eyes, stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts, insomuch, that they neither was

with their eyes, heard with their ears, nor understood with their hearts. Having

SUBMITTED TO GOD, they are now, and for the first time in their lives, prepared to accept salvation, on the conditions of the gospel. They are now, truly *humbled*. Thus was Saul of Tarsus, when, prostrate on the earth, he exclaimed, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" After this act of submission, sooner or later, (for in respect to the time, there is no uniformity,) God directs their attention to the Saviour, whom He has provided for helpless and perishing sinners, in such a manner, that He appears to be altogether adapted to their necessities, and in all respects, such a Saviour as they need. *He is their Saviour, if they accept him*—and, as He then appears "altogether lovely," they cannot possibly refrain from accepting Him. While they are indulged with this view of the Saviour, they would find it more difficult to refrain from "coming to Him," than they ever found it in their state of conviction, *to come to Him*. Then "He had no form or comeliness, that they should desire Him." Now, "He is altogether lovely," and they would stay with Him, and remain in His blessed presence forever.

They are now Regenerated—They are "born again"—not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." Hence they begin to "see the Kingdom of God." Before, they could not see it. To them, Christ has *now* given power to become the

children of God. Their reconciliation with Him, is now *begun*. They are now for the first time, made partakers of "the Spirit of Christ" in their hearts. This is "the Spirit of adoption," which enables them to approach God, now reconciled to them in Christ, and to cry unto Him, "Abba Father." Every thing, of a Spiritual nature, has become *new to them*, and this is because they have commenced a new life. As in the instances before mentioned, there may be, and undoubtedly is much circumstantial variety, so there is in this, in the views, and apprehensions of different individuals; yet they all substantially agree. They all have *new* apprehensions of God; of Christ; of themselves; of the Bible, as a Divine Revelation; of sin; of holiness; of life; of death; of the judgment; of heaven; of hell, and of eternity. In regard to all these particulars, their views and apprehensions are essentially and almost entirely, different from any thing they had before. They are now "new creatures in Christ Jesus; created in righteousness, and true holiness, unto good works." They are themselves, "created anew." In them, "old things are passed away;" and in one sense, "all things are become new."

It may be said of them, with much propriety, when this change takes place, that they commence a new state of existence.

The following summary comprehends a general account of the views, and feelings, of the new regenerated children of God, as they often express them; not

however, without making allowance for considerable variety, in the cases of different individuals.

Not unfrequently, *soon* after they have submitted their wills to God—though sometimes, not until after a considerable interval, a new view is opened to their contemplation. Their burden of distress being removed, and, while they seem to be looking about to learn their destiny, they are led to contemplate the divine character. They have different views of God; of themselves; of sin; of holiness; of the Scriptures; of the moral law; of the plan of redemption of sinners; of the Gospel; of the character of Christ Jesus; and of the grace and mercy of God; from any thing they had ever contemplated before; and, they are frequently filled with wonder, that they never viewed these things in a similar light, until then. Before this, *all was wrong* in their estimation, on the part of God; because He would not do for them, just as they desired. They *had felt* that God was unkind, and almost cruel; and, that He dealt hardly with them, because He did not appear to compassionate them, when, as they thought they strove so hard to *conciliate His favor*. *But now the case appears reversed, and all is right*, on the part of God; just as it should be; and just as they would have it to be. They would not alter any thing on His part, if they could. Sin appears to possess a very *different character*, from any thing they ever before realized. In their former estimation, it was limited to outward transgressions; and the more fla-

grant immoralities, only were *much thought of by them as being criminal*. But they now view it on a much more comprehensive scale. They now see that every thought, word, and action, of the unregenerate, possesses a moral character—and, when tried by the moral law, is defective, and sinful. They *now perceive* that God thus views the subject, and that his view of it is perfectly right. They once thought that the moral law was too strict.—No person they well knew could possibly keep it, in a perfect manner. It was therefore, they imagined, an unreasonable law, demanding what no man *could* render. But now, the law of God is perfectly right. The wrong, *and all the wrong*, is with them—and therefore, the law justly condemns them. They can now feel, understand, and fully approve of the language of the Apostle Paul: “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good; but I am carnal, and sold under sin.” From this time forward, so far as they are exercising gracious affections, the Lord Jesus “is all their salvation, and all their desire.” He is precious to them, as a Saviour from sin, no less than as a Saviour from suffering.—When under conviction, they thought it hard that all their seeking, praying, attending on religious duties, circumspection, and watchfulness, should go for nothing in the account of their salvation. Besides, they had performed *some good actions*, in the course of their lives; and to have them all cast out of the account, and be utterly stripped of *all claim to compassion*, was then deemed by

them, unreasonable, and not to be endured, at the hand of God. But now, a contemplation of the sinful defilement of *every thing of theirs*; as well of their hearts, as of their works, gives them a new and much more correct estimate of the subject. The all-sufficiency of Christ is their consolation, and they cordially choose that all the merit, and all the glory, of their salvation, should be ascribed to Him; and to Him only and forever.

Formerly, the bible was uninteresting, and obscure, and contained many things which seemed to be contradictions; and they wondered that any person could derive *pleasure* from reading it—more specially, *its doctrines*. They could derive no *such pleasure* in perusing it, as they heard others speak of. They opened it with reluctance, and closed it with satisfaction. But now, it is an invaluable treasure. They would not exchange it for all the other books that were ever made. It is truly “a fountain of life,” to them. Once, God appeared to be *partial* in His dealings. Now, He is seen to be equal; and *sincere* in all His offers; both to those who do, and to those who do not, accept them. All the fault is on their part. They have now *begun* “to know the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent;” and they begin to perceive how, in what sense, this knowledge is “eternal life.” Once they did not see, after all that was said by others about the wickedness of the human heart, but that their own hearts *were tolerably good*: at any rate, they could not perceive that

they were so bad as others represented. But now they perceive, that this was owing to their own ignorance of their hearts. They had never *examined* them before. And they are more and more amazed, and astonished, at the compassion and condescension of God, in providing a Saviour for such utterly sinful, and rebellious creatures, as they have discovered themselves to be.

When they were under special conviction of sin, and in great distress, and anguish of soul, they thought they really desired to become christians—and felt that every thing was ready on their part. They were, as they supposed, *waiting for God* to appear, and effect the necessary change for them. They had, as they then viewed the subject, done all they could, and if they did not ultimately become religious, the fault would not be theirs. But they now discover that their former apprehensions of this subject, were all wrong; that, instead of desiring to be christians, all they wished for, was their preservation from that destruction, which they saw they *must endure* after death, unless they could now be rescued from it. This salvation they knew was promised to every christian. Therefore, they wished to become christians, that they might ensure their own safety; they now perceive that their desires were *only to secure to themselves privileges promised to the christian*; but, not by any means to possess his character. Instead of their having *waited for God* to regenerate them, and make them His willing, and obedient children, they now see that God:

has been waiting upon them, to repent, and submit themselves to Him, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He might adopt them as His children. And this view makes them wonder at the patience, and long suffering, which He has exercised, towards them, during all their lives of rebellion, and disobedience. Before, they could easily pacify their reprovng consciences, with a variety of excuses. But now, they perceive that all their excuses were sinful. Formerly, Prayer was irksome ; a duty which was disagreeable to them, and, if it was attempted at all, it was with much reluctance. Now, they esteem it an invaluable privilege, which they would not be deprived of, for any consideration that could be offered them. Formerly, Religion was a subject, that they heard mentioned without interest, if not with disapprobation. Now, it is their delight. They used to contend against the evangelical doctrines of the gospel ; and disliked ministers who preached them plainly. But now, those doctrines cease to be objectionable, and the ministers who preach them most plainly, are the ministers of their choice. Formerly, when they went up to the house of God ; they entered not into the Spirit of the Prayers that were offered up to Him, and they sat listless hearers during the sermon, unless it was some extraordinary occasion ; or, unless the preacher dwelt upon the obnoxious doctrines of election, or the sovereignty of God in the bestowment of His grace, on whom He pleases. These sermons were then remem-

bered, only to be condemned. But now they can listen, with real satisfaction, to a plain illustration, and enforcement, of those evangelical truths, which once provoked their opposition; and a *plain* preacher, who brings the gospel message, is not unacceptable to their hearts. "They now love the habitation of God's house; the place where his honour dwelleth." Formerly, they thought but little, if any thing, of their own inattention to divine truth. Now, they are ready to be astonished at the thoughtless inattention of others. They were wont to think, they could become religious, at any time when they should choose to set themselves about it; and that, a little seriousness was all that was necessary. But now, religion is seen to be the business of a whole life; and they are not without many fears, that they may never be able to possess it. Formerly, they thought all christians were a melancholy, morose kind of beings, and that religion was a gloomy subject, precluding all rational enjoyment, and cheerfulness. Now, they view *real christians*, as on rational principles, *the only cheerful people*; and religion is the chief object of their desires, and their only source of real happiness. Then, they wondered how any person could derive satisfaction from the social worship of God; from prayer, preaching, and singing sacred hymns. But the matter is all made plain to them, now. The mystery is all explained; for they themselves, feel it in their own experience. Once, it was no burden to them to be absent from the house of God; and they

could pleasantly, wander over their fields, on the Lord's day. But now, they have found "the Sabbath a delight, and the sanctuary of the Lord honorable."

Thus I have, if I do not misjudge, given a general exhibition of their views, by way of contrast, before and since their regeneration. I would not be understood as asserting, that all true converts, from sin to holiness, have all these different views, and exercises; or that any have them in exactly this order. But I do affirm, that every *real convert*, to the gospel, and religion of Jesus Christ, has *some* of them. Therefore, reader, if you find, after having proceeded thus far, that you are *an entire stranger to all* that you have just perused, you need proceed no farther, before you determine what your own christian character is; and the nature of your relation to God. You may settle the point at once. You are not a christian. You are not an adopted child of God. On the contrary, you are yet an impenitent sinner; "condemned already." You have neither part nor lot with Christ, for your heart is not yet renewed by the Holy Ghost. "You are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." And, unless you repent, and be reconciled to God, you will die in your sins, and perish forever. But if those feelings described above, as belonging to the children of God, are familiar to you, in your own experience, then it is plain that you are a regenerated sinner, and that you are a partaker of the Spirit of Christ,

and an adopted child of God. Having, then, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, the evidence that this is the fact, will be made manifest to yourself, and to your fellow men, in habitual exercises of the Christian Graces; and a steady performance of the Christian duties, both towards God, and towards mankind.

I do not say that this will be equally, and uniformly, the case with you, at all times, to the end of your life. I know, full well, and would have you also know, that your *new life*, is to be a life of warfare with sin; with the adversary of your soul; and with temptations innumerable; both from within, and without. I am well aware that, in the course of this warfare, against all the enemies of your peace, and advancement in the christian life, you may be sometimes overcome, and even cast down. Yet, I know also, that, influenced by the Spirit of Christ, you will rise again and renew the combat; and, that on the whole, you will be advancing in grace, and holiness; until you finally obtain the full victory, and triumph in glory. Let us then proceed to consider, in a more particular manner, the several christian graces, which the Spirit of Christ will beget within you; and the manner in which, through his influence, you will exercise them. In this way it is hoped you may obtain a practical test, by which you may certainly determine, *for yourself*, whether you are, or are not, an adopted child of God.

CHAP. II.

HUMILITY.

The *First* Christian Grace that I shall mention, as a test of the character, of an adopted child of God, is **HUMILITY**. This grace was possessed, and manifested, most pre-eminently, by the Son of God, the Man, Christ Jesus. It is that, in the exhibition of which He appeared pre-eminently glorious, and lovely. It is highly commended, and extolled, by Him, and His Apostles. A Christian may be said to possess just so much religion, as he has of humility. I will mention a few instances, where this grace is enjoined, in the Scriptures, on all the disciples of Christ. Our Lord himself, says, to all who come to him, “take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” His whole intercourse among men, exemplified this grace, in the most perfect manner. And in this respect, peculiarly, “He has left an example” for all His disciples, requiring them, with all the authority of a positive precept, “to walk in His steps.” The Apostle Paul, as directed by the Spirit of God, says to the Philipians, and consequently to all christians, “Let nothing be done, through strife and vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also, on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also, in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not

robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Here the Apostle introduces the example of Christ, to enforce and illustrate, his injunction. In every particular of the Saviour's example, on which he dwells in this passage, Humility is the strong, and commanding feature, presented for our imitation. The same duty is enjoined by the Apostle James, after having sharply reprov'd those, to whom his Epistle was addressed, for indulging in conduct that evinced an opposite Spirit: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." It is enforced, in a direct precept, by Peter, in his first Epistle, V. Chap. 5th and 6th verses. But it is unnecessary to refer particularly, to more passages for authority on this point, since it is a fact, that humility is inculcated throughout the whole of the New Testament, in both the precept, and example, of its Great Author. His religion is a religion of Humility, and stands universally in opposition to pride. A professor of the religion of Christ, who has no true humility, is a *professor, merely*; and is wholly destitute of the Spirit of Christ. Being destitute of the grace of humility, he is also, of every other christian grace, and is altogether in his sins. How clearly does the example of our Lord enforce the exercise of this grace, as recorded in the 13th

of John ; in that instance when he girded himself with a napkin, and washed his disciples's feet ; and then told them that he had given them an example, that they should do as he had done.

Humility may be said to stand at the head of christian graces. It is called, by the Holy Ghost, "the ornament of a meek, and quiet Spirit ;" and is declared to be, in the sight of God, "of great price." It is a glorious attribute in the character of God himself. For, "thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also, that is of a contrite, and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Great, and precious promises, are made to the humble person. And all the blessings, promised in Christ's sermon on the mount, are promised to persons whose characters are indicated, by some decisive mark of humility—and to none others. Those, and to those only, who have the Spirit of Christ, are His disciples ; and each of His disciples possess a portion of this leading christian grace. In it consists, essentially, the whole christian character.

Being possessed of this grace—this humble, and meek disposition, christians will manifest it on all those occasions, which are of a nature to call it into exercise. *They will manifest it*, because they will love to honor their Lord and Saviour, who is the first object of their affections. *They will do it*, for the sake of its own excel-

ence. The moral beauty of their Lord's example, as a meek and humble man, when they are influenced by His Spirit *dwelling in them*, will attract them to Him, with an abiding desire to become like Him. In Him the grace of humility was *perfect*; and essentially contributed to form the most *perfect character*, that ever appeared in this world. And no man is conformed to the character of Jesus Christ, any farther than he is *truly humble*. Let us now, see *how* it will be manifested by those who possess it, in the several conditions and relations of life. For it is in this way only, that professors can try themselves by a practical application of the test.

Are they children—young disciples? They will manifest their humility by exercising kindness, and forbearance, towards their inferiors, and equals, in rank; by respect, towards those who are superior in age, and station; by honoring parents, and masters—by deference, towards such as sustain offices in society, both civil and ecclesiastical. Under its influence, in all situations, just so far as it actuates them, they will, instead of assuming self-importance, be conformed to the divine precepts; which teach them to “esteem others, *better* than themselves.” This *feeling* will *appear in their conduct*. In the presence of their inferiors, it will be pre-eminently evinced by condescension and urbanity in their intercourse with them. A proud feeling of self-superiority, has no relation to Humility or piety. In the relation of Brothers and Sisters, it will be shown, in constant acts of

mutual kindness, and *esteem* ; and, in an effort to avoid every action, and every expression, that would cause unpleasant reflections, if either of them were on a death bed, or in the grave.

In the conjugal relation, the nearest of all earthly connections, it will produce perpetual harmony ; exclude all irritation ; and delightfully cement and strengthen mutual affection. Parents, if always influenced by it, would always be affable and kind to their children, and to all under their authority.

Among neighbors, it will prompt to the exercise of mutual kind offices, in sickness and in health. Should there arise unavoidable contentions, and controversies, a spirit of humility will preclude slander, crimination, backbiting, and censoriousness ; and will influence those who possess it, if the occasion demands the sacrifice, to give up, for the sake of peace, a part of their own right.

The rich will show it, in their condescension to the poor. It will unnerve the arm braced for revenge ; and cool the disposition for angry combat.

Among members of the same Church, it will induce a manifestation of undissembled love, and an abhorrence of that which is evil. If all the members were possessed of a humble spirit, "they would be kindly affectioned, one towards another, in brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." In all conditions in life, the grace of humility if in exercise, would prompt *every one* "to render to *all* their due"—"tribute to whom tribute is

due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; and honor to whom honor." All men, if they were really humble, would continually strive to "owe no man any thing, but to love one another ;" and that "with a pure heart, fervently."

Such, reader, was the perfect character of Jesus Christ—and such was His *uniform example*. Each of His true disciples, by regeneration, becomes a partaker of His spirit. And, in the degree in which he possesses it, he will manifest it during his life, in the exercise of true humility. And this grace will be *increasingly evident*, exactly in proportion as he "grows in grace," and advances in holiness.

Now, it may be asked with confidence, since such were the precepts and the uniform example of Christ Jesus, during His whole life, will not His disciples, who possess a portion of His spirit, manifest the same grace, in their intercourse with their fellow men? This He certainly requires of them ; and He expects that they will honor Him, their beloved Lord and Master, by an *uniform* exercise of it. *If they do not show something* of this grace, as an habitual exercise of their disposition, as a fixed principle, they are not Christians ; they possess not the spirit of Christ ; and, consequently, they are none of His, whatever they may profess themselves to be before men, or however confidently they may hope that they are the children of God.

Now, reader, you may examine yourself, by this

test ; and, possibly, you may settle the question for yourself, without proceeding any farther. Humility is a grace, possessed, in a greater or less degree, by every real Christian ; and it will be *proportionably manifested, by every one, in his conduct through life*. If you find this feeling in your heart : if you find that your conduct is marked and regulated by its influence, under provocations, and in other trying situations, in your intercourse with the world ; and, if it is an increasing grace, growing in its influence, *over all your conduct*, and in *all your dealings*, you may safely determine the question in your favor—that you are an adopted child of God. This spirit is not *any part of the natural man*, as he is born after the flesh. No one partakes of it, unless “he is born again”—“born of the Spirit of God.” But, you are to remember, that this grace does not dwell *alone* in the heart of any child of God. If you possess Humility, you have a measure of all the other christian graces. In the next chapter, therefore, I will direct your thoughts to another trait of piety, nearly allied to humility, by which you may try your title to the character and privileges of an adopted child of God.

CHAP. III.

SELF-DENIAL.

It will not be denied that this is a christian grace, much insisted on, and expressly required of all, by Christ;

as an evidence of their being His disciples. Although the proofs of this are so abundant and explicit in the Gospel, that it may be thought unnecessary to introduce them here; yet for the purpose of assisting the reader in trying his own christian character, I will notice a few of them, and then endeavor to distinguish the thing itself from another trait, often seen to exist in mere men of the world, which may be mistaken for it.

Self-denial and Humility are intimately connected; so much so, that it would not be easy to say, precisely, where the one passes into the other. The following definition, however, will be sufficient for my present purpose.

Christian Self-denial, as required in the Gospel, is a relinquishing, cheerfully, for Christ's sake, and in obedience to His will, the right, ease, comfort, property, or any thing else, in which we have placed our affections, or which we consider in any degree valuable; whenever it is evidently our duty to do it. I believe that it is clearly evident, that Christ Jesus has expressly required all this in the Gospel. If so, the definition will not be considered as faulty for including too much.

I will first introduce some of the Scripture proofs, that Christ requires His disciples to exercise self-denial.—“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me.” This is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the account given of the young ru-

der, who came *in haste*, to Christ, to inquire “what good thing *he must do*, that he might inherit eternal life,” we are informed *how much* he was required to deny himself. He must “sell *all he possessed, and give it to the poor* ; and come, and *follow Christ*.” It is not a single act of self-denial, merely, that was required in this instance. Luke has recorded the particular qualification with which the Saviour accompanied this address to the young ruler. “And He said unto them *all*, If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me.” CHRIST *daily denied himself, for our sake* ; and whoever will be His disciple must daily do the same *for His sake*. Without this, we have His explicit testimony, that no one *can be* His disciple. This, however, will be more apparent, when we shew

SECONDLY, To what extent Christ requires His disciples to practise self-denial. And here we shall find enough to make every professor of religion tremble for himself, in view of that day, when he shall be called to give up an account of his conduct, at the Judgment Seat.

The first passage I adduce is in Luke, the 14th chapter. “And there went out great multitudes with Him ; and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, and wife, and children ; yea, *and his own life also*, he *cannot* be my disciple.” The meaning is

not, what we understand by hating an object—but that, if a person loves any, or all of these objects, so that he is not *willing to give them all up*, when Christ requires the sacrifice, for His sake, such an affection for them is incompatible with that love for Christ, which any man must feel, in order to be a true disciple. The Saviour concludes His observations, respecting the self-denial which He requires *of all His disciples*, thus: “So, likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not *all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple.” What He means by this, is fully explained in Matthew x. 37, and onward. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life, *for my sake*, shall find it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” The objects which we are to give up for Christ, are here so plainly specified, by Him, who prescribed the conditions on which he would acknowledge and accept a disciple, that no one can mistake them. They include every thing a man holds dear to his heart, in this life. When called on for the sacrifice, in the providence of God, Christians are required, *cheerfully*, to give up worldly possessions, *of every kind*—connections, property, personal ease, good name; yea, and life itself—all these they must relinquish for the sake

of Christ, whenever he demands the surrender ; or, it is evident that they value some object more highly than they do His favor. It is not, however, intended here, that every child of God, is to find in himself a willingness to do this, at any moment, whether he is called, in a way of obvious duty, to do it, or not. But the meaning is this—When the duty is *clear*, and the demand for a sacrifice of any, or *all*, of these, is *evident* ; then, if the *professing* christian is unwilling to submit to it, he is not a *real* disciple of Christ. If this is not the meaning of our Lord, then, in my own view, it is impossible definitely to understand the true meaning of the plainest language. The Apostles, after the resurrection of Christ, acted uniformly, in conformity to *this explanation* of His requirements. The same is true of the primitive proselytes to christianity. The same is true, also, of the host of martyrs, who were slain for their faith, during the successive persecutions, which have afflicted the Church, down to the present time. It is equally true, of those pious men, and women, who, for the honor of Christ, relinquish all the endearments and comforts, of social life ; and, taking their lives in their hands, go forth, among the heathens, Jews, and Mahometans, to carry the Gospel of Salvation to those enemies of God, and righteousness ; to commence and push forward, this holy warfare upon the powerful dominions of the Prince of darkness ; “ not knowing what evils may befall them ”—assured however,

of meeting with opposition, perils, and persecution, wherever they go : and, perhaps, apprehensive of sealing their testimony with their blood. But even this is not all that is required. It is required, of every disciple, that he daily “deny all ungodliness, and every worldly lust”; even that “*love of money which is the root of all evil* ;” and live soberly, righteously, and godly,” in all things, without any relaxation, for the gratification of the flesh.

Thus it may be seen, sufficiently for our purpose, not only, that the grace of self-denial, is required by Christ, of all his disciples ; but also to what extent, they may be called to exercise it, cheerfully, for his sake.

I will now briefly show how this differs from that self-denial which mere men of the world sometimes exercise ; and which may be mistaken for the Christian grace, which is so denominated.

There are, undoubtedly, many persons who “deny themselves”—and that, to a great degree : who make large sacrifices, of personal ease, and property ; and yet, are not in the least actuated by the *spirit of Christ*, in what they do. A few instances will illustrate my meaning, sufficiently.

A Father has a child very sick. He makes no pretensions to the christian character. Nay, he may be a profane and dissolute man. But, for the sake of his child, he will deny himself rest, and food, and submit to an expense which he cannot well afford. This, in itself, is right and proper. But his motive in doing

it is that which gives it its true character, in the estimation of Christ. If he is actuated only by his natural affection for his child ; if he has no regard to Christ in what he does, then He, who looketh on the heart, and knows the motive which prompts him in his conduct, regards it, not as a duty performed for Him. This is not an instance of the *self-denial* which Christ requires ; nor will he regard it as done for him, in any sense whatever. Change the object ; and, instead of a child, let the person be a friend, or neighbor, who is in distress. And suppose he does the same things for them, from feelings of friendship, or from sympathy—or even, to get rid, in this way, of an object that would otherwise, cause him continued uneasiness ; if Christ is not considered by him in what he does ; if he does it not in obedience to him, and with a view to his honor, it is the same sort of conduct as in the preceding instance.

Again ; let us suppose a poor person, and if you please, a professed disciple of Christ, calls on this man in circumstances of pressing want, and that he ministers to his relief, by giving him sufficient for his necessities—so far, he does well. But if it is done to get rid of the other's importunity ; or only from an instinctive impulse of compassion for one in distress ; if Christ, and his commandment, are out of his thoughts, and he has no regard for him, in the performance of this kindness, though it be at the expense of self-denial ; yet it partakes not of self-denial for the sake of Christ. It is the motive which actu-

ates the man ; *and the motive only*, which determines the moral character of his actions, in the estimation of God ; insomuch, that the same action outwardly performed under the same circumstances, may be either, an exercise of a christian grace, and accepted by Christ ; or an act partaking, in no sense, and in no degree, of the nature of a christian duty. This may be made more plain by the following illustration.

It is an acknowledged duty, for any man to expose, and even to sacrifice, his own life, in obedience to Christ's command. Wherever this sacrifice is made in obedience to his will, and in order to promote his honor, and his kingdom in the world, then it is, plainly, an exercise of self-denial, in the highest degree ; and is most acceptable to him. But, when life is sacrificed, or even hazarded in a duel, in order to vindicate personal honor, or gratify personal revenge, such an act, instead of being acceptable to Christ, is one of the most heinous offences against him ; one of the most daring acts of rebellion, that a presumptuous sinner can commit. Yet, the thing sacrificed, in both cases, is the same. It is life ; one's own life. Thus you may, and I think, must see, that it is *the motive*, and that only, which stamps the moral character of every action of man.

And now, reader, you may again, try your title to the character and privileges, of an adopted child of God, by this test. It is the Spirit of Christ *in all of his disciples*, which influences them to exercise the grace of self-deni-

al, with a view to his honor. It is this which renders the performance of the duty acceptable to him. That spirit influences them to do it cheerfully, habitually, daily, and on all requisite occasions. Now, ask yourself, Do I comply, in all of these respects, with what the Lord Jesus Christ has required; in motive; in feeling; in habitual practice; to the full extent of my ability? Do I feel that I am honored, by being employed by Christ, as his servant? and do I thank him for furnishing me with the means and opportunities for making such sacrifices for his honor and glory? Examine yourself faithfully, and answer these questions honestly, as in his sight: and, if you can give an affirmative answer, you have the spirit of Christ dwelling in you—you have been born of God—you are an adopted child of God; and you are entitled to enjoy all the consolations, which arise from this assurance. But if you are compelled to give a negative answer to *all* these questions, whatever you profess besides—whatever “experience you *can relate*”—whatever hope you are indulging—and whatever you may do beside, “in religion”—you may, nevertheless, rest assured, that you are not a child of God—that your hope is worthless—and that you are yet in your sins, and under condemnation.

I admit that you may be, and that it is possible that you are, an adopted child of God, although you may not be able to give an affirmative reply to *all these ques-*

tions, "in a positive manner." For all of the virgins slumbered and slept, whilst the bridegroom tarried—both the wise and foolish together. But recollect, the question is not whether you *are* a child of God—but, How may you know that you are such? If you can give an affirmative answer to this question, with reference to this christian grace, you will be able to do the same in reference to all the others. They all advance together, and keep nearly an equal pace. This does not push forward to a great length, in wakeful, lively action, while the rest lie dozing, far behind. I apprehend, that the reason why so many professors of religion, and other seriously disposed persons, who do, on the whole, give evidence of their piety, are agitating this question, and are in doubt and uncertainty respecting themselves, is, that they do not make a decided business of performing their filial duty to their Heavenly Father. They labor almost constantly, *to unite the service of God and Mammon*; and their affections are bestowed so largely upon the latter, although he is not their absolute master, that they cannot be otherwise than in doubt to whom they belong. This is, indeed, living at a miserable rate. They wander abroad from their Father's house so much, and live so much of their time away from home, that it is not to be wondered at, that they have many doubts whether they shall at last be received, and acknowledged as His children, and members of His family. It would be strange if they did not have

doubts and fears, and live in constant uncertainty. But let them follow the example of the wandering prodigal, when they remember the home from which they have departed, and let them *immediately arise*, and return to their neglected and much abused, yet compassionate Father, and make their confession with a spirit like his; and they will not long be at a loss, to know whether they will be acknowledged as the children of God or not. Until they do this, they must—they ought to be at a loss, and in doubts about their adoption. It is right that they should be; and it is best for them that they are.

CHAP. IV.

BENEVOLENCE.

Christian Benevolence is a disposition to do good to *all men*, without any stipulation for a reward, or any hope of receiving a compensation from them, in return. It is not confined, in its exercise, to our friends—"For, if ye love them only, who love you, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans and sinners the same? And if ye do good to them only, who do good to you, what do ye more than others? even publicans and sinners do good to those who do good to them again." If you do no more than this, what is there in your conduct, that distinguishes you from other men? There is no benevolence in such actions as these. It is, at

best, an exchange of kind offices. It is doing good on principles of self-interest, and for the sake of a reward from men. But the Christian's benevolence is of this kind: "Do good, as ye have opportunity, unto *all men*." "Love and forgive your enemies." "Lend, hoping for nothing again." "Freely ye have received; freely give." "Bless them that curse you; do good unto them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Such are the precepts of Christ; and His example corresponded with them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What was the conduct of Stephen, a true disciple of Christ? "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This benevolence is required in every clause of the Decalogue. It is summarily comprehended in this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Its exercise is most beautifully illustrated in Deuteronomy, xv. 7th to the 11th verse, inclusive. I will transcribe it, that you may see what God required of His people, in the Old Testament, and what He requires of you now—and what you will be inclined to do, so far as He gives you the means and the opportunity, if you are actuated by the Spirit of Christ. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, *within any of thy gates*, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand, from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his

need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the seventh year, the year of release is at hand ; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother ; and thou givest him nought ; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because, that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land ; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." This passage is one of the most explicit and particular, contained in the Bible, on the practical exercise of that species of benevolence, commonly called charity, or alms-giving. It clearly defines the manner and extent of the duty, as well as the proper objects towards whom it is to be exercised.—The spirit or disposition, with which it is to be performed, is clearly defined. In the New Testament the same spirit is required. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we are taught, that we are to consider as our neighbor, *every individual* of the human race. And, in one short, but comprehensive precept, we are informed *how* the whole of this duty is required to be performed.—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” In the passage quoted from Deuteronomy, God promises His people, if they will

fully obey Him, in this injunction, that He will bless them with such a measure of prosperity, in all that they put their hands unto, that is, in all their lawful worldly business, as shall enable them never to want for the means of doing good; which, also, necessarily implies, that they shall always have enough for themselves.—Our Saviour repeats the same promise, in His Sermon on the mount: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” The things here promised are, every thing for useful and comfortable living, in this world.

But it is unnecessary farther to multiply quotations from the bible, to prove that Benevolence is a Christian grace; and that its practical exercise is required of all His disciples, by the Lord Jesus Christ. The kindness of God, to sinful men, is an example of His disposition to do good to His enemies. The whole life of Jesus Christ, is one uninterrupted, and universal exercise of the same disposition. All who have the spirit of Christ, will *believe* this living testimony, as having the sanction of Divine authority. And they all possess something of the same benevolence themselves. The degree in which they possess it is exactly in proportion to the measure of the spirit of Christ in them. It *was exercised*, by the whole multitude of the primitive believers in Jerusalem; and they *practically evinced*, by its exercise, that they did possess the spirit of Christ. And they did not doubt about their adoption.

Now, reader, having seen that benevolence is required, in both the Old and New Testaments; that it is at the bottom of all the practical duties in human society, which the christian religion enjoins; that it is the feeling, which God continually exercises to a world of sinners, who are all by nature and practice, his enemies; that it prompts Him to the exercise of beneficence towards all His creatures; that it is the spirit of Jesus Christ himself; that spirit which influenced Him to leave His infinite felicity in heaven, and come into this world of rebellion; here to become poor—to go about doing good to men; knowing, all the time, that they hated Him, and would put Him to death, in return for all this benevolence; that He requires, in each of His disciples, the possession, and exercise of this spirit, in imitation of His example; that every one of His true disciples does possess some portion of the same spirit; that there are continual calls, in His providence, upon them all for its exercise; and that He has promised to bless those who do, in reality, obey His requirements, in this particular, with all the necessary means for doing good, so long as the duty devolves on them: Do you, having been now convinced of all this, require any thing more than to look at your own conduct in life—what it has been, and what it is now—and to scrutinize the feelings, with which you give to others, of your substance, especially, your money, to ascertain whether you do it with pleasure, with a joyful gratitude to God, for furnishing you with means, and

employing you as His almoner? Or whether it grieves you to be thus called upon to impart to others, so that you do it grudgingly, and sparingly; and wish that such calls had been directed to others, instead of yourself? Do you need, I say, any thing more, than a careful, and faithful examination of your heart, in relation to these several particulars, to determine, without a possibility of mistake, whether you possess the spirit of Christ, or not? Your conscience does not, and will not deceive you. If you do not do those things in any proportion to the means which God has put into your hands, and do what you do, grudgingly, with sorrow of heart, and with regret, that this constitutes a part of your duty; You need proceed no further; you may settle the question here.— This is no part of the spirit of Christ; nor is it, in any respect, an imitation of His example. The spirit of Christ, operating on His disciples, causes them to do, *cheerfully*, whatever they can do for Him. “Thou shalt open thine hand *wide to thy brother*, to thy poor, and needy; and *thou shalt not be grieved when thou givest him.*” This is an injunction of most solemn import, and is *in full force now, on all God’s people*—as much as it was when it was first communicated to Israel, by Moses, their divine legislator. And if they possess the means for obeying this injunction, without interfering with the performance of other duties, they are not to content themselves with giving *but just enough to keep the poor from literally starving and freezing.* “Thou

shalt impart to him *sufficient* for his need, in that very thing that he wants," This is the rule, and this is its measure; and nothing short of this. Now if you will apply it faithfully to your own case, I apprehend you will be satisfied what the fact is with you in relation to this great question, whether you are, or are not, an adopted child of God.

Have you an absent friend, who has done the greatest kindness for you, which you ever received; saved your life, for instance; who in a letter, requests you to perform a service for him, and furnishes you with all the necessary means for doing it; will you hesitate? Will you be at a loss, whether you derive pleasure from doing it for him? Whether you feel gratified, with *this proof of his confidence* in your esteem, shown by his applying to *you*, instead of another? If he had passed you by, and employed another agent to perform the service, would you not be grieved, and fear that it indicated a want of confidence in your friendship? And on the other hand, if you felt backward to do what he requested; if you did it with reluctance; and, would have been better pleased, if he had requested some other person to do it for him, ought it not clearly to show *you*, that your professions of friendship for him are not sincere; and that you have no genuine gratitude in your heart, for the kindness he has done you? The principle is the same in both cases. But your obligation to Christ is far greater

than any obligation to a fellow creature. He has bestowed all the good on you, that you have ever enjoyed ; your property, and every pleasant and desirable thing, that you possess. He has likewise procured for you, by His sufferings and death, all that you ever will enjoy in this world, and in the world to come. And, after having put the means into your hands, He calls on you to manifest your respect, and gratitude, to Him, by giving a portion, but a small portion comparatively, of your substance to a poor person, whom *He sends to your doors* ; It may be one of His suffering disciples, whom you have acknowledged to be a christian brother, or sister ; And will you, can you, relieve that person *reluctantly, or sparingly, and with sorrowful feelings* ; and yet think you have the Spirit of Christ ? It is clearly impossible, unless you are in the last gasp of spiritual life. For, “ Whosoever hath this world’s goods, and seeth his *brother have need*, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?

CHAP. V.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.

This christian grace is closely allied to the benevolence, which we have just contemplated. The tendency of each of these graces, so far as it exists in the Christian, is to make his *moral character* resemble the character of God.

The Christian's life is a life of perpetual trial. The world is opposed to the spirit of the real Christian, for the same reason that it was opposed to its great Author. The world, (that is, men of the world,) hated Christ, because He reprov'd them, both by His precept and example. He testified of them, that they were evil.—And, in the same proportion that Christians *manifest* that they possess the spirit of Christ, *by an imitation of His example*, the world will hate them; and will frequently take occasion to manifest this, by abusing, insulting, and falsely accusing them. Every such occasion will furnish a trial of their christian forbearance and long-suffering; and, if they have the spirit of Christ, *and are under its influence, they will, in these circumstances, shew it in their conduct*, in this way.

This grace is abundantly enjoined, both in the Old and New Testaments. It is specified, as a divine attribute, and often exhibited, from the time when God proclaimed His great name to Moses, and caused His goodness to pass before him, through all the period of the first dispensation. The moral government of God, in relation to this world, is a perpetual exercise of long-suffering and forbearance. It is of the Lord's mercies that, as a race, we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not." "I am the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, slow to anger," &c. The example of Jesus Christ—"The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His per-

son"—“the image of the invisible God”—“Emanuel; God, manifest in the flesh”—His example exhibited divine forbearance, in absolute perfection, from the beginning to the close of His life, on the earth. It was most gloriously displayed in his agony in the garden, and on the cross; and it continues to be exercised in His government of the world, now when He is exalted on His throne of glory, at the right hand of the Divine Majesty. In what instance did He resent an injury? Yet, who ever endured so many, so gross and wanton provocations and insults, as He did? In what precept has He allowed His disciples to show passionate resentment, or to seek revenge? Has He not uniformly forbidden *every thing of the kind*? When His disciples should be persecuted in one city, what did He tell them to do?—to stay and fight? to return evil for evil—railing for railing? No. His direction was, to *flee* to another city.

But, surely, it is needless to enlarge on this particular; since every person, who has read the Bible enough to induce an enquiry in his mind, respecting his relation to God, must recollect that it is, throughout, opposed to revenge, resentment, and the indulgence of any angry feelings, even towards our enemies; and demands of us patience, forbearance, and kindness, under every provocation and injury from men.

Now, reader, you may examine yourself by this rule. How do you generally feel, and how do you conduct towards your fellow men, when you view yourself as hav-

ing been *injured by them*, either in your person, your good name, your family, or your property? I say, how do you *generally conduct* on these occasions? For, it is not a single instance of either resentment or forbearance, that determines your character—but the *habitual course* of your conduct, in this respect. This, certainly, will be according to the prevailing, *habitual disposition of your heart*. Simon Peter once cursed and swore, uttered falsehood, and denied his Lord. In this he committed a great—an aggravated sin. But this did not evince his *established character* to be that of a profane man; an habitual liar; an apostate from Christ. He fell, indeed, most grievously, on that occasion; as did also the ten other apostles—for they all forsook Christ, and fled. Although they had all just declared, with Peter, that though all men should be offended because of Christ, yet they would never be offended; and though they should die with Him, yet they would never deny Him—but, they all forsook Him, and fled. This fall, however, did not evince their general character to be that of wicked men. But their immediate repentance, and habitual devotedness to Christ, both before and afterwards, evince the contrary. The question is not whether you have been guilty of an act of resentment once, or twice, in your life; but what is your *habitual practice* under insults, and provocations? And do you *justify* such a course of conduct in yourself, or

others? In any case, wherein you have thus gone astray, has it caused you to feel grieved, and penitent, and to humble yourself before God? Have you, by earnest prayer, sought His forgiveness, with weeping, confession and godly sorrow?

I know that, from the time when the Christian receives the Spirit of Christ, when he is born of the spirit of God in regeneration, "the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit;" and that this contest is continued, till the close of life. But, I know also, that, as the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, so the house of David grew stronger and stronger. Such was the spirit of Christ; and He evinced it uniformly, in a corresponding treatment of all those who abused Him. And such is the spirit of Christ, in all those who possess it; and, in proportion as they possess it, it will be *manifested* by them, in a similar conduct, on all occasions, when they are called on to exercise it. What is the fact, reader, in your own case?

Patience, under the afflictive dispensations of Providence, is so nearly allied to Long-suffering and Forbearance, that I shall not particularly descant on it, as a separate article. It is an important grace, and is much insisted on in the Word of God; and is strikingly indicative of the christian character. "In your patience, possess ye your souls," was an injunction which Christ gave to His disciples, when He was sending them forth on an enterprise, in which *He knew* they would have

ample occasion for its exercise. And this injunction is given to every man, as a standing rule of his conduct, through all the vicissitudes of life.

Every intelligent Christian has an *abiding* sense of the over-ruling providence of God, in relation to every event that occurs; and is particularly mindful of it, in all those which attend him personally, from time to time. Especially will he be mindful of it, in reference to all such events, as materially affect his circumstances and situation in life. And thus will he be led to refer every thing that takes place to the divine will, as it is exerted in His providential government. With this view of the subject, if he possesses the spirit of Christ, he will feel inclined to say, under his sorest trials, as his Lord did in the garden of Gethsemane—"Not my will, but thine be done;" and as Eli and David did—"It is the Lord, let Him do with me as seemeth good unto Him." But, if he is in the habit of saying, "I think I have more than my share of afflictions"—wondering why he meets with *so much more trouble* than others; and feeling that he is hardly dealt with—his conduct does not show the spirit of Christ, existing in his heart; but the spirit of the world, with an ignorance of the evil of sin, and of the heinous guilt of rebellion against God.

Patience under suffering, whether the suffering is produced by abusive conduct, on the part of our fellow men, or by immediate inflictions, by the hand of God, is the same spirit; and if it is exercised, with a regard to

the honor of Christ, in obedience to Him, and in imitation of His example, it is *then a christian grace*, inspired and directed by the spirit of Christ. When it is manifested under the suffering, produced by the unrighteous conduct of others, it is intimately associated with another christian grace, which shall be the subject of consideration in the next chapter.

CHAP. VI.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

This grace is seen in the character of Christ, in the most pre-eminent degree. It is this which He is exercising continually towards His enemies. If this were not the case, we must all relinquish hope at once, and sink into despair. One of the declarations of Jehovah to Moses, made when He caused His great name to be proclaimed to him, and showed him His *goodness*, is this “forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.”

The petition for forgiveness, in the Lord's Prayer, is thus qualified—“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The duty of forgiveness is expressly enforced on men, in the most solemn and explicit manner, in the declaration which is subjoined: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly

Father forgive your trespasses." There is a beautiful illustration of this injunction, in the parable of the servant to whom his lord forgave the debt. It shows to what extent forgiveness is to be practised. His lord forgave him *all the debt*—and he was required to do the same to others. Do you say this was a *pecuniary debt*? Be it so. But does this weaken the force of our Saviour's injunction, or limit its application at all? I apprehend it confirms and strengthens it, (if possible) in application to the forgiveness of injuries. The case was an aggravated one. His Lord trusted him with his property. This he had, both negligently, and wantonly, wasted. Thus he had become his *pecuniary debtor*, by dishonesty. Yet his Lord freely forgave him the whole, *because he requested it*; although he promised to pay, at a future time. It was implied, it appears, of his forgiveness, that he should do the same to others, as occasion required. He afterwards refused to do it, and was punished. The frequency with which the exercise of forgiveness may be required of us, is determined by our Lord, in his reply to an enquiry of Peter. Peter asked if he must forgive his offending brother *seven times* in a day? on the condition, that the offender turned to him with an *expression of penitence*. Our Lord states a definite number, for an indefinite, thus: "I say not unto you until seven times; but until seventy times seven;" plainly, a number of instances very unlikely ever to exist, between one man and another, in the compass of one

day. The meaning then, is, that *always*, so *often as another injures you, and acknowledges it, and expresses his sorrow*, you are to forgive him ; cordially, entirely, and from your heart. Nothing short of the forgiveness of the heart, is forgiveness. The requirement then, includes all kinds, and the whole amount of injuries, which you receive from your fellow men. Although you may be so situated that you may not have it in your power to *express your forgiveness* verbally to him, who injures you ; yet, you are always to *feel* it, and to be in readiness to *declare it*, to him, when he gives you an opportunity.

Every injury we receive, at the hands of men, we may consider as a providential trial of our characters, put upon us, by the Most High. For, whoever is the instrument of it, and however unconscious he may be, of the fact, *that he is only an instrument* in the hand of God ; still, if we are christians, we shall so consider him. Although we may not deserve it, from him, yet we do deserve it, at the hand of God ; and it is God who lays it upon us ; and He looks to see how we feel, *and conduct*, under the trial. And He requires us continually, and universally, to exercise a spirit of forgiveness. Now let us apply this test, in several particular cases.

Suppose a brother in the church, for instance, has seen or heard of wrong conduct, which you have committed. He comes to you and tells you of it. Suppose he comes *as he ought*, in the spirit of meekness, and christian affection, and *faithfully* admonishes you. How do you

receive him? With gratitude, and tender love, *for his fidelity to your soul?* Or do you *feel* as if “he was meddling with what is not his business;” give way to resentment; and *harbor a grudge against him afterwards*; and, whenever you see, or think of him, does that spirit of bitterness, *immediately rise*, so that the *very thought of him* is unpleasant? It is easy to decide this enquiry.

But suppose he comes in an exceptionable manner, and is really *faulty on his part*; How do you then feel? Do you pity, and forgive him? Are you ready and forward, to put *the most favorable construction you can*, on his motives? Do you approve of his motives, although he may have mistaken the fact, though his *manner is faulty*? When you retire to your closet, and, in secret prayer, present your petitions to “Him, who seeth in secret,” and the thought of this man, this professed brother, recurs to you, what effect does it then produce *on your feelings*? Do you there fully, sincerely, and from your heart, forgive him, and pray *as fervently*, for him, notwithstanding the injury he may have done you, as you do for yourself and your family? Or does his coming to you, *thus*, excite within you, when you meet with your friends, and the subject is alluded to, a disposition to criminate him; to misrepresent his conduct, and arraign his motives? and on the other hand, to justify yourself; concluding perhaps, with such expressions as these, “I believe he may as well look at home, and see that all is

right there, before he meddles with his neighbor's affairs. I believe he will find enough to rectify at home, if he will look there more, and go abroad less. He may as well mind his own business. He had better pull the beam from his own eye, before he attempts to pluck the mote out of the eyes of others?" Such sarcastic crimination is but too common, on such occasions; and what does it indicate? Why this; That Pride is wounded, and revenge excited; and that there is lurking in the heart, a feeling that would lead you to exult, if you saw this brother involved in trouble; a disposition to misrepresent his motives—in fact, a feeling of hatred; which is as far from a *forgiving spirit*, as the spirit of Satan is from the spirit of Christ. Perhaps your feelings are so embittered, that you withdraw from the Communion table, and resolve not to return there, unless the church will discipline and punish him—although *you* have never taken one step—one *regular gospel measure*, to convince him of his error; but instead of this, have violated your covenant with him, by going to others, and speaking evil of him, in their presence. May you not find in your heart, if you look there, *without prejudice*, a secret reason, *why* you have not "been to him, and told him his fault, between you and him alone?" And is not this the reason, that there is really, no fault which you can justly charge him with? Does not your conscience testify, when you consult it honestly, that he has done his duty, like a faithful brother, and that your feelings are

thus excited, because he has *detected you in a fault*, and *told you of it*, with christian fidelity? But suppose, instead of his being a brother professor, and a member of the same church, the monitor or accuser is not a professor of religion, while the case, in every other respect, is precisely the same. How stands the affair then? If you thought you could *possibly forgive*, in the first instance, is it not clear, in this case, that you have no idea *that you are required to forgive him?* and for this reason, merely, that he is *not a member* of the church? But, suppose you admit that you are *bound to forgive him*, and pretend to do it—are you not ready to qualify it by saying, “Though I may forgive, I shall not readily *forget?* Suppose he is a wicked persecutor, and oppresses you, by unjust lawsuits; by withholding property of yours unrighteously, because he has it in his power to do it; by throwing down your fences, and turning cattle into your fields, to destroy your crops; by slandering you; and by all that variety of means, which wicked men do sometimes resort to, for gratifying their revenge. Do you feel disposed to retaliate his conduct, and to *pursue him* with vengeance; and would it afford you pleasure to hear that he was overtaken with some sore and distressing calamity? What was the conduct of the blessed Son of God? Who was ever so hated without a cause? Who was ever so unrighteously persecuted by the wicked? Who, so much insulted; false-

ly accused; and pursued with malice? Yet, what did HE DO? He *could* have destroyed all His enemies in an instant. But what *did* He do? "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter? And there, in His expiring agonies, He prayed to His Father, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And *He did forgive them, himself*. What was the conduct of Stephen? "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And how did the Apostles and primitive converts do, when *their* enemies destroyed *their* property? "They took patiently the spoiling of their goods." "Being *reviled*," "they *blessed*." Are you sensible of the fact, that these trials are laid on you, by God himself, to *try* you, to *prove* you, and to show you *what spirit* you possess, and suffer to govern your actions? How much are you influenced by the Divine precept, "Avenge not yourselves, for vengeance is mine, saith the Lord?" On such occasions, what Humility do *you feel*, and *manifest*? what *Patience*? what *Submission* to the will of God? what Forbearance? what Long-suffering? what spirit of Forgiveness of injuries?

And yet, are you not looking around you, for *evidence* that you are an adopted child of God? To what purpose? Perhaps you will reply, "*I once obtained a hope*," in a time of awakening, some ten, or twenty, or thirty years since. I will reply again, by asking you, what it was good for? What has become of it? What *have you done* to cherish it, while your temper prompts

you to feel thus towards those who injure you? “Your bed is shorter than that you can stretch yourself on it, and your covering narrower than that you can wrap yourself in it.” If *your hope* is departed, let it go, I beseech you. Take no pains to bring it back. It is a treacherous companion; an enemy, in the guise of a friend, that would delude you to the destruction of your soul. Be thankful that it has departed in such season, that you may yet go on your knees to the Mercy Seat. Go there, then, instantly, and *there* humbly confess *your awful delusion*; and resolve *there to remain, and perish*, (if you must perish) crying for pardon and sanctification, and for a *new* and good hope—a hope that shall not forsake you, when “that of the hypocrite shall perish.” If *your feelings and conduct towards any human being*, are such as have been described, verily, you have no farther occasion for investigating the question, “Am I an adopted child of God?” Think what kind of prayers you have offered to God, while indulging such a temper. “If I regard iniquity *in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,*” says David; and so may every one say. For, whoever observes his course of life, and the experience he has had in the providence of God, will surely find occasion to believe in this declaration. The prayer of any person, indulging such feelings as are *manifested by some professors of religion*, when they view themselves injured, is, most emphatically, “Sin.” It is a sacrifice which God abhors. It is truly an abom-

ination in His sight. "If a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. If he compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain." I need not ask *you* how near that conduct, and those feelings, which we have been contemplating, correspond with that enjoined in these precepts. Will you say, that the character we have been describing is overdrawn? That professors of religion, even the most inconsistent among them, do not proceed to such an extent. My dear reader, *if you have not seen it*, more than a few times, I must think your lot has been favorably cast; much more so, than that of many of your brethren; certainly, far more so than mine.

Here, to guard against being misapprehended, let me remark, that *forgiveness of injuries*, does not require that you *approve*, or even that you do not *disapprove* of the CONDUCT, of him who injures you. You may condemn his conduct, whenever it is wrong. Indeed, you are bound to condemn it, as you are to condemn any other wickedness. Yet this is perfectly consistent with *forgiving* him who has injured you, and extending to him, unmingled benevolence. Be careful then, that you do not, while you profess to forgive him, *approve, in yourself*, the conduct you condemn in him, by going about among others, proclaiming his wickedness, "with railing accusations, and highly colored statements. This, instead of doing as you would be done by, is doing, as you think you are done by; and thus, you undertake to give mea-

sure for measure, of an evil requital, instead of committing your cause to God, and looking to Him for your recompence.

“If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way. First, be reconciled to thy brother—then come, and offer thy gift.” The manner, of this direction was adapted to the ritual worship of the Hebrews, which was celebrated by the offering of sacrifices. They were here taught that they could not offer their sacrifices, with the divine acceptance, so long as they were conscious that they had given *any one* an occasion of offence, without having, at least, taken all reasonable pains *to become reconciled*, by removing the offence. The *spirit* of this direction is as much demanded now, under the gospel dispensation, as it was under the Mosaic form of worship. And a man is no better fitted now, than he was then, for performing *any act* of worship, so long as he is conscious that he has given cause for offence *to any person*, and has not, at least, made a faithful effort to be reconciled to him. And the conscience of every christian, if allowed to testify, *will shew him, truly*, whether he has given any occasion, for his brother, or fellow man, to be offended with him. I am aware, that the manner in which this divine direction is *commonly construed*, is much more *limited*, than I have here supposed. So far

as I recollect, it is commonly applied to the single act of Sacramental Communion, at the Lord's Supper. But I apprehend this is restricting it to a *very narrow application*. I see not why it does not apply *equally, to every other act of religious worship*, as well as to the sacramental communion of the saints. Is the *heart* in any *better frame, for offering prayer acceptably to God*, either social or secret, while it is harboring bitterness towards any person, than it is for approaching the Lord's table? The same may be asked, in relation to any act of divine worship.

Now, reader, if you possess a forgiving spirit, you have also, a desire to *be forgiven*, by others. And you will cheerfully, take the steps necessary to obtain their forgiveness, as your Lord has directed, in order that there may not be a conflict between your *will* and *conscience*, continually disturbing your peace of mind. And if you do not do this, is it not because you are unwilling to humble yourself before God, in the presence of your injured brother, or sister? Search diligently, and *see what the fact is*; that you may become fitted to offer a *pure offering*, with acceptance, before God. He looketh on your heart. You should honestly do the same.

Should all, who usually enter the houses, set apart for public worship, whose duty it now is, adopt this course, *before they again present themselves in the sanctuary*, for the worship of God, is there not much reason for believing, that, for some time at least, His churches would

be but thinly visited? And yet, this is the only scriptural way of coming, *with a rational expectation* of being accepted, in our worship.

CHAP. VII.

WEANEDNESS FROM THE WORLD.

“No man can serve two masters.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” “Be ye not conformed to this world.” “Demas hath forsaken me, having *loved this present world.*” “And confessed that they were strangers, and pilgrims, in the earth.” “Lay not up for yourselves, treasures on earth.” “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” “They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction, and perdition. For the *love of money* is the root of all evil; which, while some men coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” “Covetousness, which is idolatry.” “Idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.” All of these passages speak in a language, not easily misunderstood. And do they not all admonish us of the guilt and danger of worldly affections; and directly enjoin upon us, the duty of being weaned from this world. These direc-

tions imply nothing that is incompatible with constant industry—with the lawful acquisition of property—with frugality ; and with a *prudent*, and *careful*, use of this world's goods. Although the Apostle John was directed to say, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him ;" yet, when he is understood *correctly*, there is nothing in this declaration that contravenes any duty, we are required to perform, in this world. The meaning is, that if a man has his affections set so strongly on any thing in this world, as that his happiness *chiefly*, or *supremely* depends on his *possessing it*, he does not love God. If he is *unwilling* to part with any portion, or even the whole of his possessions in obedience to the will of God, and thus honor his Maker with his substance, "he loves the creature more than he does God"—which is, in fact, not loving God at all. "He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, brother or sister, houses or lands, *more* than me, is not worthy of me." "And whosoever he be *that forsaketh not all that he hath*, he *cannot* be my disciple." In giving to the poor, or for any charitable purpose, God, in general, calls no man to impart, *only* "as He has prospered him," and enabled him to do it. But to that extent he requires him to do it, *willingly*, *without grudging or reluctance*. "For God loveth a cheerful giver." He does not gather where he hath not strawed, nor reap, where he hath not sown. And none but the slothful, and grudging, ever accuse Him of doing it. An undue

attachment to the article of property, such as causes men to give, when duty calls, only a pittance of what they are clearly able to give, demonstrates the existence of a covetous disposition.

When men of affluence are presented, in the providence of God, with a call for charity, if the nature of the call, *evidently* makes it their duty to give *largely*—and they give *sparingly*, in comparison with their ability—they manifest that they are not weaned from an undue love of the world. If the providential *call* demands of any one, but a small donation—still, if he then gives less than he *ought*, in the estimation of God, he gives grudgingly; and manifests the same worldly attachment. But if he gives all that the nature of the providential call requires, and gives that *willingly, and with cheerfulness*—although he may be able to give many times more—yet he shows a right estimate of the world, and evinces, that he *would willingly*, have given more, had it been required of him. This man has learned to place a *right estimate upon property*; and, of course, on all worldly objects—and though he may be industrious, and frugal, he is not parsimonious, nor avaricious. He knows, *practically*, the right use of property; and is so far weaned from it, that he can give it up, for the honor of God, *whenever God calls on him to do so*. These remarks apply to people, *in all* the different pecuniary circumstances in life. It is not the amount of one's possessions, but the nature and degree of his attachment

to what he possesses, which determines his character in this respect. He may idolize a little, if it is his all, as truly, as if it was much. And he may be weaned from the one, or the other. The *disposition* is the same, in relation to both.

The more a man loves God, the less he loves this world ; and the more correctly does he estimate its value. The more highly he values Christ, the less does he value the world ; and in that proportion, is he *weaned from it*. The Apostle Paul, suffered *the loss of all things, willingly*, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Yea, he counted the world, and all things which it contained as worthless, when placed in comparison with his Lord. The primitive christians in Jerusalem, cheerfully gave up their *whole property*, to promote the honor of Christ. Is the *christian spirit* the same now, that it was then ? Or has it changed its character ? A traveller, in a foreign country, far from his home, if he labors to gather substance that he knows he cannot carry home with him, acts very irrationally, and unwisely. If he conducts, consistantly with his character, as a foreigner, and a stranger ; knowing that he must shortly leave that country for his own home, he will labor to secure such things only, as will be required, to render his journey comfortable, pleasant, and prosperous. He will discard every toil, and every accumulation, that will encumber him, or impede his *preparation*, to return to his home. Provided he knew certainly, that

he must soon set out on his return, though he was ignorant of the precise time *when he must embark*, he would, if he acted consistently, make it his first, and indispensable concern, to be in *readiness at a moment's warning*. No part of his preparation would escape his attention; especially, if he knew that he might possibly be called for, *unprepared*. But, if he was careless; and inattentive to his preparation; had accounts, in different places, unsettled; and little, or nothing laid in that was necessary for his journey; if, in these circumstances, he was *amusing himself*, and dissipating his time, and substance in pursuit of pleasure; Would not all rational persons, that witnessed his conduct, pronounce him an *infatuated* man? Would they not say, that he thought but little, and *cared less*, about his home? Judging rationally, they would conclude, according to this last supposition, that he was willing to remain in that foreign country, *if he could*—and, at any rate, that *his affections were not weaned from it*; but according to the first, that he felt himself to be a stranger, in a land, foreign to *his* home, and *away from all* that was dear to him; and that he was anxious to depart, and to be in full readiness for his journey, whenever he should be summoned away.

Apply this illustration to the case of a christian. The spirit of Christ influences him to *feel* that he is in a strange land—a foreigner, away from his home—away from his treasure—away from his father's house. It renders him anxious to leave it, and return home, to his

friends, and to his possessions, where his heart is already gone, in anticipation. He will not encumber himself with any unnecessary burdens. Much less will he toil to amass a large amount of property, *which he must leave behind him*. With whatever else he may be occupied, he will never lose sight of the great, the most important business, of preparing to be in full readiness to depart. This *will* occupy him principally.

Reader, look at your own attachments, and observe your habitual conduct. What is the *leading object* of your constant labors? Where are you striving to lay up a treasure? Where are your attachments fastened? On what objects are your affections fixed? For which are you most solicitous; to make a comfortable provision for living in this world, or to prepare to live in heaven? You may thus determine where your heart is. For where that is, there is your treasure. If you have the spirit of Christ, *you feel* that you are placed here, to finish the work that your Father sent you here to do; to be in preparation to leave the world and return to Him, whenever he sends for you. And, as you know not when he will send, you will wish to be continually employed in *His service*, that your work may be done. Then, you will depart with gladness; for you will not hear His call *with dread and fearful apprehensions, unless you have neglected his business*, and are unprepared for your departure. If you love your father, and his family, you will be *glad* to go to him, when it is his pleasure to have you

return at home. For where your treasure is, there is your home, and there are your affections and your attachments. Now, reader, are you at a loss to *know*, from the application of this text, whether you are an adopted child of God, or not?

CHAP. VIII.

TRUST IN GOD.

What is Trust in God? What does trusting in God imply?

Do you know what it is, to trust *in your Parent, or Friend*? The act of putting your trust in another, in itself considered, is the same, in both instances. If you trust in a man, you confide in him, that he will not, in the end, intentionally deceive or disappoint you. This implies that you believe him to be entirely *worthy of being trusted*. This belief is founded on evidence, which fully satisfies you, that the man is possessed of a character which renders him worthy of your confidence. If you have doubts or suspicions respecting the character of a man, you do not confide in him. With respect to man, however, your evidence must be limited, because man is himself a frail, dependent creature. You may have such evidence of his integrity of heart, and entire uprightness of purpose, as to indulge no doubts on that

point. But yet he may fail, and disappoint you, by reason of some physical disability to perform what you expect from him. Or, he may fail by reason of death. But not so with God. It is impossible that He should fail of fulfilling His promises; or that He should deceive or disappoint you. The nature of this grace has been illustrated by the case of Abraham. Paul says "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." The instance of his faith, specially referred to, is his believing the promise of God that Sarah, his wife, should bear a Son. According to the ordinary course of nature, the fulfilment of this promise *was very improbable*. Sarah had always been barren. At the time when the promise was made, she was advanced in age, beyond the time of child-bearing. But God promised him, that she should bear a Son, from whom should proceed a large posterity; and that, in due time, Christ should be born of his posterity, who was the promised Saviour of the world. Abraham was fully *persuaded* that God was *able* to fulfill *this promise*, notwithstanding all the natural difficulties. He was fully persuaded of His *faithfulness*; and that He *would do all* that He was pleased to promise; he therefore relied on Him, with entire and absolute confidence, that Isaac would be born of Sarah, at the time appointed. This belief of his, was counted to him for righteousness. And here, I observe, by the way, that this is the Faith of the Gospel. It is the same confidence, reposed in Jesus

Christ, as possessing the faithfulness and power, which will dispose and enable him, *without fail*, to do all that he promises to do.

But what does trust in God imply? To answer this question, several particulars must be considered.

First. It implies an undoubted persuasion that God exists. It goes beyond even the strongest probable belief. It amounts to absolute assurance.

Secondly. It implies a full, an absolute persuasion, that God has revealed himself to man, in the bible; and that the bible is *all* given by His inspiration; and is, in this sense, His word. It implies, farther, a full persuasion, that all the bible contains, is His word; and therefore strictly true. It is not a belief in the bible, as the word, or *opinion*, or testimony, of Moses, or Samuel, or David, or Solomon, or Isaiah, or Matthew, or John, or Peter, or Paul, or of any of those men, whose names are mentioned, as the writers of the several portions of it. It is a belief that they wrote exactly what God, the Holy Spirit, directed them to write, unless it can be shown that there are interpolations.

Thirdly. It implies, that you have some acquaintance with the character of God, as He has revealed it; and, also, that you have some correct knowledge, and understanding of the contents of the bible generally.

Fourthly. It implies, that you believe that God is just such a being, as He has represented himself to be. I

need not enumerate His particular attributes. To trust in Him, *you must know* what they are.

Fifthly. It implies that you consider God as addressing all His moral precepts, all His threatenings, all His invitations, and all His promises, *to you individually*, as much as He did to those to whom He addressed them, at the first—and, with as much particularity, as if He had called you by name; and said “Thou shalt, and thou shalt not,” do this, or do that; and that you consider this to be true, with respect to every individual, moral agent, to whom the bible is communicated. It implies farther, that you believe He will execute the threatenings, which He has denounced against the impenitent; upon you, if you are found impenitent; and that He will fulfil to you, all the promises, He has made to believers, *if you are a believer.*

Sixthly. It implies, that you fully believe, that God has done all that He says He has done, in the bible; and that He will do, all that He, therein, declares He will do; without undertaking to determine for Him, what is *reasonable*, and *what would be right*; and what is *unreasonable*, and *what would be wrong*, for Him to do; thus making a God, and a bible, *to suit your own views*, and FEELINGS. This is renouncing God, and *rejecting His revelation*, instead of trusting and believing His word. It implies, that you believe the *doctrines* of the bible, just as you find them stated; without under-

taking to mould, to construe, and to *accommodate* them, to suit your own views, and feelings, and wishes.

Seventhly. It implies, that, while you thus believe in God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, you commit all your interests, for time, and eternity, into His care ; believing that the dispensations of His government, are the best that they possibly can be ; you certainly view them thus ; and if you trust in God, your desire, and endeavor, is to leave every thing with Him ; and feel *entirely satisfied* with whatever He does. All this, at least, is implied in trusting in God ; nothing *short of it*, deserves the name.

Christians may, and do, have many doubts, and fears, respecting their title to the promises, because of their own unfaithfulness—of their constant proneness to forget God ; to be conformed to this world—and to commit sin ; and, because of the deceitfulness and wickedness, which they daily discover in their own hearts, they often doubt, whether they are real christians : and fear that they are self-deceived ; and that they shall be finally cast away. But they have no doubts about the bible's being a divine revelation ; for they have felt its *convincing*, and *condemning power* : nor do they doubt respecting the truth, and faithfulness, of Christ, in fulfilling all his promises, and executing all his threatenings. In these truths, they are immoveably established, for “they have the witness in themselves.” A real christian is as fully persuaded, that God will *destroy the impenitent*, as

he is, that He will *save the believer in Christ Jesus*, and bestow on him, pardon, and eternal life. No art, and sophistry, of cunning men, can shake him in this belief.

But there is still another view to be taken of trust in God. Job, in his deepest adversity, after he had been stripped of *all* his sustenance—when his wife stood aloof—when his children were all cut off in a sudden and awful manner—when *children* mocked him with indignities, and insults—when his flesh was a putrid mass of corruption; and his intimate friends had turned against him, with reproaches, and accusations; under all these burdens; and even when it appeared to him, that God had become his enemy, he could say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” In extremely trying circumstances of adversity, Habbakkuck said “Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.” The sevenfold heated furnace, could not destroy the trust in God, which was felt by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel retained it in the den of lions. “*They that trust in the Lord, shall never be confounded.*” “They shall not want for *any good thing.*”—But trust in God, is the same in kind, by whomsoever it is felt. It is not of equal strength, at *all times, in the same person*—nor in all Saints, alike. But every child of God, exercises more, or less of it, at all times, and in all situations, in this life. The Saviour has given us a perfect example of trusting in God.

It is not a difficult thing for those who believe in di-

vine revelation, to *feel at ease*, and in quietude, (a state of mind which they are ready to think, comes from trusting in God,) in a season of *prosperity*, and when no apprehension of danger is felt. When health is enjoyed; and prosperity attends them, and their society, and country; and God smiles on all things in which *they are interested*. But this is no trial at all, because every thing is as they desire. When the children of Israel had got away from the immediate presence, and from under the power, of the Egyptians, and were marching off, enriched with their silver and gold; they were full of confidence; and were ready enough to *promise*, to do *all* that God, and His servant Moses, should command them. But a very short time brought them into a situation, where danger, of the most formidable kind, assailed them. They were shut up between two mountains, one on the right hand, and the other on the left—with the Red Sea before, and the Egyptian host behind them. *Then they were tried*. Then their trust in God was put to the test. So it is with Christians. When every thing, appertaining to themselves; their families; the society in which they live; their country; the prosperity of the Church; all, or any of these, are seriously threatened with great evils; perhaps, destruction; then they are called on to trust in God; and then they are tried, and proved, whether they do really trust in Him, or not.

I will suppose that your house is burned; or your

property is fraudulently taken from you ; or your crops are destroyed, by an hail-storm ; or your husband, or wife, or children, sicken and die ; that your country is invaded by a desolating foe ; or is parched with drought, so that the earth yields food, neither for man, or for beast ; and you are threatened with a famine of bread ; and that your beloved offspring may pine away with hunger, before your eyes ; crying to you for the means of subsistence, and you not be able to furnish it : even then, you would be required to trust in God. The case here supposed, though a strong one, is by no means impossible. Cases have, not unfrequently, been realized, in which many of these particulars have been united, by which the professed people of God have been tried, as to their trusting Him, or not. The instances of individuals, of this kind, are numerous, as they stand recorded in the bible. The duty is fully enjoined, and as frequently repeated, as any other to which God calls His people. It is connected with blessings, which God has promised to those who *trust* in Him, and thus honour Him, in circumstances of peculiar trial. There are as strong inducements to the performance of this duty, set before the people of God, as any other in the whole round of Christian duties ; and yet, how stintingly is it performed, even by those who do, on the whole, furnish evidence of their being real Christians !

You, reader, have, it is highly probable, been tried in some one or more of these particulars, in the course

of your life. Perhaps you have buried an affectionate and beloved wife, who has left you with the charge of a family of young children, who need the nourishing care, and the tender watching, which none but a mother is competent to render. It seems to have deranged all your plans for their future welfare; and you feel yourself to be a lonely, desolate mortal; with a burden resting upon you, that you are unable to support, and yet, imposing duties you have neither the power, or wish to dispense with. Your way is dark; beset with difficulties, that appear insurmountable; and in fact, it is hedged up. In these circumstances, what is your temper? your frame of spirit? Do you murmur in your heart, and enquire, in a complaining, peevish temper, "What have I done, that I am so much afflicted, more than my neighbors? Why am I singled out, and thus chastened, when others, whose situation is much better fitted to sustain such calamities than mine, are left in continued prosperity?" The path of duty is plain, in such a situation, and in every other scene of affliction and bereavement. It is, "Be still, and know that I am God," who have done this. The language of Trust is, "It is the Lord, let Him do to me what seemeth good to Him." Does your heart immediately go forth to Him, in some such language as this—"Though I walk in darkness, and can see no light, yet I will trust in the Lord;" for He has assured me that "they that trust in the Lord shall not want for any good thing?" They that "trust in the

Lord, and do good, shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed." "They shall be like Mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth forever." Such is the confidence, such are the feelings, and such is the language of those who trust in God. Do you feel persuaded that God sees that these are just the trials which are necessary, yea, indispensable for you; and that this is the best, on the whole, that He can do for you; that it is done by Him, who is infinite in wisdom and benevolence; and who unerringly contemplates your best good, in all that He does? Do you *feel* in your heart, that, although you can perceive no way in which you can proceed, yet, that God can open one for you; and that, *therefore*, you will commit yourself and family to His care, guidance and protection; and there rest? This rule of trial will apply to any other scene of affliction, adversity, mental darkness, and perplexity, with equal propriety and correctness, as to the one here specified. Do your trials quicken you in prayer, and render you more punctual, fervent and spiritual; more earnest, and resolved to prevail, and to gain admission into His presence, and learn from Him what He will have you to do? Do they make you feel, increasingly, your entire and absolute dependence on God; and render you truly thankful that He allows you to come to Him, and tell Him all that you suffer—all your feelings—all your desires—yea, to pour your whole heart into His bosom? In your deepest trials, and heaviest afflictions,

do you, on an examination of your heart, feel that what God does with, and for you is, not only right and just, but best—better for you than you could do for yourself, if you were permitted to choose your allotments? And, therefore, you do still choose to have Him appoint for you, rather than to have some part of the direction under your own control? And if so, is it because you have confidence in his perfectly excellent character—or is it, simply, because you know that you cannot prevent His doing what He will; and therefore, that the desire to have the control in your power, is utterly vain? In other words, do you really choose it, because you are persuaded it is best to have God do whatever pleases Him—or do you only submit, as quietly as you can, merely because you cannot help it?

The latter is far, very far indeed, from trusting in God. It is, I fear, often mistaken for it. But it is neither more nor less than the surly acquiescence of a flagellated slave, because he has it not in his power to wreak his lurking vengeance that rankles in his breast; but which he lulls, with the best grace he can, lest he incur deeper suffering, if he manifests its existence.

Trust in God, is an heartfelt gladness, that I, and my all, for Time, and Eternity, are absolutely in His hand, and subjected, unconditionally, to His disposal. Seasons of deep affliction, when His comforting presence is withdrawn, and His own hand takes the scourge, and lays on one stroke after another; each succeeding one

the most severe, till absolute destruction seems determined on—will call it into exercise. Then, *if the language of my heart* is, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good,” I may know that I trust in Him. This is demonstration.

I do not assert, that it may not be, and is not, felt and manifested, in seasons of less severe trial. But if it is not in those of less severity, it is certain that it will not be, in the greater. And the case supposed, is, by no means unprecedented. There have been many, very many, such—and, in all probability, there will yet be very many more—and in them the children of God have trusted Him, even to the wheel, the scaffold, and the lighted faggot. I do not say that you are not, nor that you cannot be a child of God, unless you possessed this. I am well aware, that but comparatively few of his children, are called to such severe trials. Recollect, the question is not whether you *are* a child of God, but it is, *how you may know* that you are one. Therefore, to bring it down lower, and adapt it to cases which are more frequent and common; if, in such trials as are laid on you, you find that you do prefer having God order your condition and circumstances in life, to having the ordering of them for yourself; if in those, the most distressing of all you endure, your prevailing desire is, to know the way of your duty; and if you do, habitually, and with cheerful submission, go forward and perform it, leaving the consequences to His dispo-

sal—it furnishes one of the most decisive evidences of adoption, that can be given. It is not a single act of trust, nor that, in a given instance of trial, which furnishes this evidence; any more than a single act of trusting his earthly father, by a rebellious son, will prove him a dutiful child, when the general and habitual course of his life, is perversely opposite. This branch of my subject is inexhaustible. I think, however, enough has been said on it, to furnish the evidence, by which you may safely try, and determine the question, if you are impartial, and thorough in the investigation.

Now, reader, reverting to an illustration used in the commencement of this chapter, ask yourself, if you can be at any loss to determine, whether you trust your friend, or your parent? I presume you will not hesitate to find an answer here. Why should you respecting the question, whether you trust in God? You may think you do trust in Him, when He smiles on you, and renders your condition easy and pleasant. But this is no test. When a parent smiles on all his family, doubtless, they will be pleased. But let him frown, and, *apparently*, leave them in distress and want; and not make any provision for them; and not tell them *why he does this*; then, if they feel that it is all right, and *best for them*, because they confide in his wisdom, and affection; if they feel that it would be incompatible with his characteristic kindness and benevolence, to deal thus with

them, only with a view to their best good, and that he will in due time, make this appear to them,—then, indeed, they do trust in him. Although they may *feel desirous* that he would be pleased to change his course, and manner, of dealing with them ; yet even this desire will be *in submission to his pleasure* ; persuaded that the goodness of his disposition will not admit of his doing any thing but that which is best. Confident that *he knows what is best for them*, much better than they do themselves, they choose to leave all in his hands, and have him act his own pleasure. Change now the application of these views, from an earthly parent, to our Father in Heaven ; contemplate his character as it is exhibited in Christ Jesus ; for there only, *can you view it correctly*. If, with a just view of God, you can feel thus towards Him, as your Father, and find, when He *appears* to turn against you, and to frown upon you ; when He takes away your property and dearest friends ; and when He seems to turn His ear away from your prayer, and to hedge up your way *on every side* ; then, I say, if you can *feel satisfied that all this is best for you*, because you are persuaded, that His own Excellence will not allow Him to do any thing but what is best : In short, if you *cordially acquiesce* in it, because God has done it, and because it is His pleasure that it should be so, then you may know that you do trust in Him ; and that you are an adopted child of His. No unregenerated sinner ever did, or ever will, feel resigned to God under trials, from

such a motive. He may be silent, and submit himself sullenly to His condition, because he sees that he cannot alter it. But "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because, thou did'st it," expresses the submission only of those who trust in God.

CHAP. X.

PRAYER.

Prayer, although, strictly speaking, it cannot be styled a Christian *Grace*, yet it is the practical exercise of Grace in the Christian's heart, implanted there in his Regeneration; is so important and indispensable an evidence of the genuine Christian character, that it becomes necessary to introduce it into this work, as furnishing one rule, by which the reader may learn his own character, and the nature of his relation to God. He need be under no mistake.

In Prayer, the Christian expresses the desires of his heart, to God, as a child, to his father. A person never offers a prayer to God, in the character and with the disposition of a child, until he *is* a child—and this he *is not, until he is regenerated*. I admit that he may have offered, what is called prayer, many times, before; as "Saul of Tarsus" did, undoubtedly, before his conversion, near Damascus; but none of them were offered or addressed to God, as to his Father. And I venture to affirm, that

every real christian will say, this remark is true, as it applies to himself. He will acknowledge, that *before* his conversion, in all his prayers, “he worshipped he knew not what.” But *since* that time, he has, at least in some instances, *known whom he worshipped*, and to whom he presented his prayers and supplications. So that of every child of God, it can be said with truth, not until after his regeneration, as it was said of Saul, “Behold he prayeth.” Prayer, then, proceeds *only* from the *new heart*, which the child of God *receives*, when he is born again, and is received as a child into His family, by adoption.

After he is adopted into the family of God; he begins to feel his relation to Him, as his Father. From the bible he learns, (but in a miserably slow manner, it is acknowledged,) the privileges of a child, which his Father allows him. For these he loves to go to Him, and thank Him. One of these privileges, (and that by no means the least,) is Prayer; permission to come into His presence, and tell Him all his feelings: his trials; his fears; his sorrows; his temptations, and his wants: and all this, with a consciousness of his own entire dependence on his Father—knowing that He is acquainted with them all; and that He is both able and willing to sustain, protect, supply, and deliver him. He knows that he may come to Him, and pour out his heart before Him, and make known all his requests to Him, just as often as he desires; and that his Father will not frown

upon him, and send him away in displeasure. He knows, if he goes to God, as a dutiful child to his father, and sincerely acknowledges his transgression, when he has done wrong, that his Father will forgive him. He knows, although He has given him many good things, which he has asked Him for, in a great number of instances, that he may still go to Him, and keep going as often as he pleases; and that his Father is always able, and always ready to give him any, and every thing that he wants, which will be for his good; and that He will not, like rich men, upbraid him for coming too often.

The child of God sees, that such is his true character and disposition—it being thus presented before him in Jesus Christ, who is “God manifest in the flesh”—who never refused to grant the request of any one who asked His favor, when He was in this world, if the thing desired was for the good of him who sought for it. Every child of God *has begun* to learn his own incompetence for determining what will be for his own good; and he feels that it is a great privilege to have access to a Father, who does know, and who loves him too well to give him that which will be injurious to him, or withhold any thing that will be for his real benefit. Hence he loves to go to his Father, and tell Him what *he feels* that he wants; and then submit it to His perfect knowledge, whether it is best to grant it—and have Him give

or withhold it, just as He pleases. The child knows that his Father will do neither one nor the other, without the best reasons for it; and that He only is competent to determine what is best. He knows also, if his father withholds the particular thing he asks for, that He will give him something that will be better for him, than that particular thing would have been, if He had given it as an indulgence, only because he asked Him for it. He chooses, therefore, when he prays, to ask God for those things which are agreeable to His will, notwithstanding he asks for things in particular, as they seem desirable to himself; but it is always, (when he truly prays to God) with this submission.

Having learned that he has a Father, who is so good, so benevolent, so bountiful—in truth, in all His attributes, infinitely perfect, he loves Him—he cannot help loving Him: not simply because He does *him* good—and gives him many good things, (although he will be grateful to Him for this reason) but *because He is so good in His nature and disposition*; and is so ready to do good to all His creatures—yes, even to His *sinning, rebellious creature, MAN*. True, when he views God, only as a stern lawgiver, who is both able, and determined to vindicate and maintain His law, entirely, by inflicting the full penalty of it on every transgressor, without any allowance or mitigation, for any reason the transgressor can urge—being conscious that He has transgressed and broken His law, in numerous instances—

the sinner cannot approach Him, *as a Father*, but only as an angry Judge; and he never will either *love* Him, or come to Him *with hope* or confidence, as a child. It is impossible. In this character only, He has nothing amiable or desirable to the sinner. When thus contemplated, He appears as an inexorable tyrant, exclusively; and he would gladly avoid Him forever. But when, after he is born again, he sees Him, as His *real character* is presented, in the life, disposition, and conduct of Jesus Christ; the compassion; the kindness; the condescension; the meekness; the willingness to come and seek after, that He may save, His sinning, and rebelling creatures; entreating them to return to Him, with real sorrow for their unkind, and undutiful treatment of Him, that He may forgive them, and receive them as His own children; I say, as soon as ever he sees this is the true character and disposition of God, as His own Son shows it, and declares it—he can no more avoid loving Him, and loving to come to Him in Christ, than he could avoid fleeing from Him, when he viewed Him only as an unchangeable law giver, and inflexible Judge; determined to destroy every transgressor of His law.

The regenerated sinner, when he finds that God is, in Jesus Christ, His unchanging, His Almighty Friend, who, in all the loveliness he exhibits in Jesus Christ, says to him, “I am your Father, and you shall be my son;” I ask, Will he not love him? Will he not love to come into his presence, *often*? Will he not love to con-

verse much, with him? Indeed, will he not desire *to be in his presence continually*? Can he be happy, or even at ease, any other where? And, having learned, by experience, his readiness to smile on him at all times, when he approaches him with the respect, and affection, of a dutiful child; and his continual willingness to give him every good thing that he wants; If he has a family, or friends, *whom he loves*; will he not *love to bring them with him*, to his father, and ask him *to own them as children*; and bestow his love, and his blessing, on them also? If not, I ask why? A young child, who loves his father, and always meets him with a smile of affection, and confidence; if he has a little friend, who is dear to him, will he not love to take him by the hand, and lead him into his father's presence, that he may love him too; whilst he witnesses the smiles, and tokens of affection, his little friend receives from his own father? When you was a child, reader, have you not done this very thing yourself? And did you not *love* to do it? I have thus stated the case, that you may examine, and try yourself; and also, judge of the conduct, of many whom you know, who profess that they are christians—and some who *hope they are*, although they do not publicly profess it before men.

Are you a professed christian? A head of a family? Do you pray with your family? Perhaps you do. I hope you do. And I hope you pray to God, and not to the open space, without any *defined* object, to whom

your prayers are presented. But, even if so; How many others do you know, who do not pray in the presence of, nor *with* their families? And what are their excuses? I know them; and I presume you know them, also. "I have no gift." But have you not a "gift," sufficient to enable you to make your fellow men *understand you*, when you want a favor from them? And when you *really feel* that it is essential for your personal interest, to obtain that favour, and that you cannot do without it; do you stop, and wait, and put off, to see whether you have a "gift," sufficient to ask your neighbours to accommodate you? If not, your excuse is not the true one. It is false; and urged by you, *to keep the real one out of sight*; because you are ashamed to own, and confess it, to your fellow men.

"But I have not confidence." "I should not know what to say if I began." I will not say that this is not, in some respects, true. But it is not, by any means, true to that extent your language implies. But even if it was, it is a state of slavery—of miserable bondage, *to your pride, and the fear of man*; one that you are in duty bound to break through, and liberate yourself from immediately. *In the first place*; It is your pride that enslaves you. You *began* your family-state *wrong*. You began without prayer. And you have continued thus; justifying yourself, it may be, by the example of your neighbors, and probably, some of them "Church-members." Now you have children grown up, who are ac-

customed to this neglect ; and you are hence ashamed to *begin*, lest they wonder at, and make remarks about, your change. Thus your pride keeps you *spell-bound*, and shuts you out from the presence of God. “You regard iniquity in your heart, and God will not *hear* you” in any service.

In the second place ; If you want to have the Town lay out a road directly by your land, which would much increase the value of your property ; rather than not obtain your object, you *would speak before the whole town meeting* ; and you would find language, with which to make your wishes known, and clearly understood. This you would do, even at the risk of being laughed at, “because your language was not *good grammar*, nor polished.” Then, if you really felt your need of obtaining the favor, and “the blessing of God, that maketh rich,” for yourself and your wife, and children, would you not find confidence to pray to God, in their presence ? The excuse you offer, is *untrue*, and without any validity. The truth is, you are afraid of being laughed at by men ; and you neither feel, nor really believe in, the *necessity*, or *efficacy*, of Prayer. This is the whole of the truth of the case. Even if the excuse were true, it is not insuperable. Two efforts, resolutely made, after fervent secret prayer for assistance, would entirely surmount it ; and your way would be plain, easy, and pleasant, ever after, if you are in fact, a Christian. But so long as you live in the *neglect of praying with your family*, you give

one of the most conclusive evidences, which you can give, that you are not a child of God. A real christian, who has a family, *will pray in his family*. It is, in his estimation, a privilege of such high value, that this world contains *no object, of sufficient worth*, to tempt him to part with it. A Cristian head of a family, *cannot, and will not*, live without praying with his family.

“But there is no *special command* for a Christian to pray *with his family*. I have searched the bible through, and I can find not one.” But you found that which has all the force, and sanction of an *express command*. You found the *example of Christ*. But, did you ever think of examining the Bible, to see if you could find any express command, any positive precept, making it *your duty* to strive to gain property?” “Oh no! I want no precept for that. Every body *loves* to acquire property, and I want no injunction to urge me to do that *which I love to do*. That is motive enough.” My friend, do you know what you have acknowledged? “Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.”—I reply, EVERY CHILD OF GOD *loves to pray with his family*, if he has one. *That is motive enough*. He does not look through the Bible, to find a special command to urge him to do that which he *loves to do*. He needs no such command. He is satisfied that he is permitted to do it. He has *God's permission*; he is thankful for the privilege; and he avails himself of it with pleasure. He does not do it, as a slave performs his unwelcome task,

through fear ; who would *gladly neglect it, if he dare*. Such a feeling is a stranger to a Christian's heart. He would not omit prayer with his family, if he might. Would a son, who truly loved his father, be glad to neglect calling to visit him ? On the contrary, would he not call as often as he could, consistently with his other duties ; And would he not also be glad to take his family with him ? I never yet saw the man that felt the want of a Divine Command, to induce him to do any thing which he loved to do, unless he doubted about its lawfulness. On the contrary, the authority of God, though given in a positive command, is often found insufficient to *prevent men from doing* what they love to do, even when they know that God has expressly forbidden it, with a sanction of the most tremendous penalty.— But, suppose Jesus Christ were now standing in your presence, and were to call your name, and ask you thus, “ Was either of the reasons which you assigned to your fellow men, for neglecting Praying with your family, the true reason that influenced your conduct ? ” Remembering that he would, at once, detect you, if you equivocated in your answer, what would your reply be ? Would you answer in the affirmative ? I am very confident you would not. Would you say, “ that you did not, in your heart, believe he required his disciples to pray with their families, and therefore, you did not think it a duty acceptable to God ? ” I am equally incredulous. I do not believe you would dare to say so. What then, would

you reply to this question? It must be the true reason, for you would not venture to assign a false one *to him*. And it would, I presume be this: "I was afraid I should be ridiculed, and laughed at, by my neighbors. I dare not encounter their sneers and scoffs—although I knew it was my duty; and I knew also, that God had said, 'He would pour out His fury on the families that called not on his name'—families which lived without the social worship of God; and would put them on an equal footing with the heathens, in this respect—yet I was so much bound *by the fear of man*, that I omitted it; hoping that my weakness would be considered by thee; and that thou wouldst pardon me, and not exact it at my hands."

Whatever may have been the fact, in days of comparative ignorance of the duty which is enjoined in the word of God; or in seasons of violent persecution, unto death; *it is not now a fact*, that a Christian, who is a head of a family, *can live* without praying with his family, any more than that a real christian can continue to indulge in daily drinking spiritous intoxicating liquor, when such an effort is making by the church, and the christian community, to extirpate drunkenness from our country. Neither the one or the other, *is possible in this age of christian light*, knowledge, and exertion. And if you are flattering yourself that *you can*, the great deceiver has gotten you into the situation, of all others, he could

desire the most; with the greatest certainty of your destruction; that you can live in the neglect of, what your conscience tells you is your duty, and still be a child of God; one whom he will acknowledge, and receive into favor, in the Judgment.

Reader, if you are living thus, and excusing your conduct, you may settle the question at once, without reading any farther; your hope is that of a hypocrite. "You are living without God in the world." You are still an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and are a stranger to the covenant of promise." You may "have a *form* of Godliness," but you have not its "*power*." If you "have a name that you live"—that is all. "You are dead." And, in the Judgment, Christ will say to you, "I know you not. Depart."

CHAP. X.

INTEGRITY.

This is sometimes called "Moral Honesty." There are few words, however, in common use, which are so *imperfectly understood*, by a very large portion of mankind, as Integrity. Many restrict its application to fair, and upright dealing in pecuniary transactions. But this is only one, among many of its applications. Nay, a man may fulfill all his pecuniary contracts, and pay punctually, every just demand upon him, and yet not be

a man of real integrity. This only proves, that so far, he acts honestly. It may yet prove that he is a knave. The Integrity of piety, is an indwelling principle, abiding continually in the *heart* of him, who possesses it. It is intimately connected with all of his transactions, with God, and his fellow creatures. It is a permanent principle. It does not influence him to-day and lie dormant to-morrow. It is a universal principle. It does not direct him to pay one man an honest debt, and suffer him at the same time to overreach another man, in a bargain. It is an ingenuous principle. The Heart is its dwelling place: thence it extends its supervision to guard the tongue and the hands, that they may not go contrary to its instructions, and betray its interest. Yet, it appears as though most people think that a man, who pays all his honest debts, is doubtless a man of integrity. Suppose then, that this honest man, becomes a seducer, and betrayer of female innocence, and virtue; what then is his character? Is he still a man of Integrity? No, he never was. *As a principle*, integrity never found a place in *his heart*. And, if you ever see him, in *failing* circumstances, you will probably see him *defrauding* his creditors, by *secreting his property*.

Suppose he pays all his debts, as people say, *honestly*, and procures the money to do it with, at the gambling house. Is he a man of integrity? As it respects the intercourse of men with each other, the integrity which is wanted, is summarily inculcated in the second clause

of the great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In the gospel, it is comprehended in this short precept—"Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye the same unto them." As it regards our intercourse with God, the following precept, perhaps will be found, if correctly understood, summarily, to comprehend it. "Sanctify the Lord God of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

Integrity, is a HOLY PRINCIPLE, predicated upon the moral law of God. It is fixed in the heart, and its exercise is regulated by an enlightened conscience, which is *correctly instructed* in the spiritual demands of the moral law, by a judgment, that approves of what that law requires. It is excised in *every transaction*, which men perform. Such is christian integrity; always the same. Like the character of its Glorious Author, "it changes not." It is dignified and disinterested in all its operations; its energies are uniform; and its field of influence, and operation is universal.

We will now proceed to an illustration of these general remarks, by giving them a *practical application*, to several particular cases.

1. If a man makes a promise to another, and *secretly intends* not to fulfil it exactly in time, and manner, according to its tenor, and conditions; he is a dishonest man. The *moral character* of the action is determined by the *intention*. That intention is, *to deceive*. And whether he

effects it or not ; it is the same thing, in the sight of God. He *would have done it*, if he could. The *purpose* was in his heart ; and it was a *dishonest purpose*. If he did not *accomplish his intention*, he was not kept back from it, by any moral principle. He is destitute of integrity, so long as he justifies such conduct, and regulates himself by such a principle.

2. If in the silence, and darkness of midnight, a man contemplates making a bargain with another, *with a design to overreach him*, and take an advantage of his ignorance, or incapacity, so as to get his property, in such a way as he would disapprove of in another, when practiced on himself ; whether he effects his purpose, or not, is the same thing, in the sight of God. He is a dishonest man. If he justifies such a way of dealing, and *would practice it*, whenever he could find opportunities, he is destitute of the *principle* of integrity. “As a man thinketh or purposeth *in his heart*, so is he.” Let him ask himself, whether he would approve of another man, who should deal thus with him, or with one of his children ? His honest reply, will settle the point at once.

3. If a man has negotiated, and closed a contract, with his neighbor, which is to be fulfilled on a future day ; and afterwards discovers that it will prove disadvantageous to himself ; if he *refuses to fulfil his engagement*, for that reason ; and justifies himself because he cannot be compelled to fulfil it by law—that man is dishonest—he is a knave in his heart. If, because he

can, he conducts in relation to his contract, in any way, that he would not approve of in the other party, in a change of circumstances, he is not a man of Integrity. His character may stand fair with men—he may have *conducted uprightly*, in many other instances—yet, if such is the *principle* of conduct which he justifies, and whenever he can, applies, surely he is not an honest man.

4. If a man *recommends an article*, of his own, with a view to sell it, as being of a *better quality*, and more valuable, than he knows it to be, he is dishonest. Whether he sells it, and defrauds the purchaser, or not, *his character is the same. He would do it if he could.* It shows that he is ready to deal with others, according to that principle. Such is his disposition, and it is dishonest. With the full knowledge of the fact, he gives a false representation of the thing. He states, *as truth*, that which *he knows is false*. When lying, and truth, change places, then such arts may be consistent with integrity; and such conduct, with honest dealing. Now let us suppose that the purchaser, in this case, by and by wishes to sell the same article, and its first owner also wishes to buy it. If he is not willing to give for it, what he received of the purchaser, he is not honest. You may say, perhaps, that this is straining the point of honesty, beyond measure; and that such a kind of dealing is very common, even among professed christians. To this, I reply, that the man who practices thus, shows that he has done by his neighbor, as he is unwilling his neighbor

should do by him. It is certain, therefore, that I strain the point no higher than Our Lord has done. Until Integrity may operate altogether in favor of self—until it ceases to be a principle of *equal justice* to all mankind—such a kind of dealing can never receive the divine sanction; *it must, and it will*, in the estimation of God, bear the stamp of dishonesty. The best that can be said of it, is that it is a way of cheating not quite so disreputable as some others.

The fact, that many professors of religion deal upon this principle, if it be a fact, (and I greatly fear it is) proves nothing in favor of its being an honest principle, any more than the fact, that in Roman Catholic countries, many members of that church, approve of the Inquisition, proves that that engine of tyranny, oppression, and blood, is an *Holy* institution—as it is denominated. It shows, indeed, the low state of moral feeling, and the limited knowledge of the bible, possessed by many professors of religion—it shows the little regard they pay to the authority of their acknowledged Sovereign, when it opposes their temporal interests; and the miserably stupid condition, into which they have brought their consciences. It proves, pretty clearly, that, “whilst they have a name that they live, they are dead.”

If a man has one rule by which to sell, and another by which to buy: as for example, if a man who is wishing to purchase, claims the privilege of trying the article beforehand, and will not grant the same indulgence,

if requested, when he is wishing to sell; I cannot see how his conduct is consistent with strict integrity. It does not comport with the direction of Christ. And every rule of dealing, that will not endure to be compared with that perfect standard of integrity, it seems to me, is not strictly an honest rule. I have sometimes heard it said, "It may be said, he is a *tolerably honest man*." But I do not know of any "tolerable honesty," as distinguished from strict integrity of principle. If it is any where to be found, I suspect it must be among those men, who sell by one rule, and buy by another, agreeably to the case just stated.

5. If a man owes an honest debt, which, through the forbearance or remisness of the creditor, or by any other means, has become "out-lawed," by having continued, without a settlement, beyond the term specified in the "statute of limitation;" so that the creditor has now lost his *legal right* to enforce a collection; and the debtor *refuses* to pay the debt, merely, because he cannot be *compelled* to pay it; is he an honest man? No; he is a knave in heart, and a swindler in practice. A statute law cannot change the *moral character* of any transaction. It can no more, make that, which is right, wrong, than that which is wrong, right. If I owe a debt to my neighbor, I am always his debtor, until I have paid him all the debt. And, although the statute may place it in my power, to decline paying that debt, yet the statute can never make it honest, or right, in me to do so.

If a man finds any valuable property that another has lost, and secretes it; or refuses to expose it, so that the owner may have opportunity for recovering it, he is not an honest man. It is true, he has the best right to the property, until the right owner appears, and shows his claim to it, provided he has taken *due* measures, to inform the owner where it is; and if no owner ever appears, the property belongs to the finder, if he has taken such measures. But if not, he is a knave, because he has not done that, in the case, which *righteousness required*; that which, in a similar case, were he the looser, *he would justly have required*, of another.

Such conduct, by whomsoever practiced, will stand recorded, on the Book of Gods account, as a positive violation of the eighth command in the decalogue, as truly as those acts of grand larceny, for which the perpetrators are incarcerated in a penitentiary.

Since this is a subject of immense importance to every one—since dishonesty of heart, or, which is the same thing, of principle, will shut all those out of heaven, who die with the guilt of it upon them; and since there are so many temptations to practice it; and so many ways in which it is practised, I will presume still farther to extend these illustrations.

All who have been admitted to the oath of Freemen, have sworn that they will obey the constitution and laws of the commonwealth. Among these laws, is one, which makes “money on interest,” taxable property. Sup-

pose then, that a man who loans money, that it may accumulate interest, instead of putting it out, in his own name, does it in the name of his son, or his friend ; and thus covers the transaction, to keep it away from a legal assessment. Is this honest ? How would he view such conduct, if perpetrated by an individual, towards himself ? Yet, how many do this, who would indulge very unkind feelings, towards the person, who should question their integrity ! Perhaps they have not once thought of its being a dishonest manœuver. Yet, I presume they would be reluctant *to have it disclosed* ; not merely from a dread of the penalty, *of a fourfold assessment*, but from a regard to their own reputation ? What can render that conduct honest, when an individual is one party to the transaction, and the public the other, which would be, confessedly dishonest, between two individuals ? I must confess, I am unable to see. I know not what can render *cheating the public*, less immoral in its character, or less dishonest, than cheating an individual.

I will state but one case more, at present, to illustrate the character of integrity between man and man, and then consider it, as applicable to our transactions with our Maker.

Suppose, on passing my neighbor's field, I discover *my cattle* in it ; and that they have injured his crop to a greater or less amount. No other person has seen them. I dismount, and immediately turn them out. If the cattle belonged to another man, it is highly probable that I

should call, and inform the owner of the field of what I had done. In such a case, I should have no counter motive ; and it would be natural for me to do so. But, the cattle, which have done him the injury, *are mine*. I have found them there, and I am liable to be compelled to compensate him for the loss he has sustained, if it becomes known. If, however, I keep silence, he cannot discover whose cattle have done him the injury, and *he* alone must sustain it. Suppose, then, I hold my tongue. What is the moral character of my conduct in this instance ? Surely, the reader will not require me to answer. It is too obvious to need to be given. And yet, how many, in all probability, would conduct in the manner supposed, even towards a brother, in the church. But, what would honesty require in this case ? Exactly what I should *wish* my neighbor to do to me, in a change of circumstances. It would require me to go to him, and give him an exact account of the matter ; and then tell him, that I was both ready and willing, to make him a just recompense, for the injury he had sustained through my means. This would be honest.

No one can be ignorant, that there is a class of Mechanics, who will promise to do your work, by a given day, and assure you that you may depend on having it at the time specified ; who will, nevertheless, be almost sure to disappoint you. It is not my business to determine whether this remark applies, more appropriately, to one kind of Mechanics than to another ; nor whether

it is more properly applicable to mechanics than to laborers of any other class. My design is to let it apply wherever it may; to examine the practices alluded to; and enquire into their agreement with the principles of integrity.

A young mechanic establishes himself in business, in a community where he is surrounded by several others of a similar occupation; and where each is naturally a competitor with the rest, anxious to secure business to himself, and extend the circle of his customers. He is requested to do a job of work for a man, whose permanent patronage he would be glad to enjoy. His help is rather limited. The applicant is very urgent to have his work finished, by a certain time. The Mechanic's help, he knows, is inadequate to the undertaking. He cannot employ more, in season to do the work by the time it is wanted; yet, for the reason above mentioned, he is very unwilling to lose it. He expresses doubts, at first, whether it will be practicable; and the customer being particular on that point, is about leaving him to apply to one of his neighbor mechanics. To prevent this, he suddenly recollects himself, makes an *apparent* calculation, about his ability to accomplish it; and comes out with an absolute promise, that he will have it done in season. "May I depend upon it?" anxiously asks the employer—"may I be sure of it, by the set time, so that I shall not be disappointed?" To this he receives an unqualified affirmative answer. In the case I

am supposing, the mechanic's *main object* is, to have the work *left at his shop*. He knows, at the moment of promising, that the strong probability is, he will not be able to fulfill his engagement. But he can *begin* the business; and it will be no difficult thing to render some *plausible excuse*, for his failure. The work is begun; and, of course, it will be finished, *at his establishment*, some time or other; and his own object is effected. The employer is disappointed; the mechanic pleads some fabricated excuse, on which he calculated, perhaps, when he engaged. "He is very sorry;" and is abundant *in his regrets*, for the disappointment, which he, by no means, intended, and which would not have been experienced, had not something, *very unexpected*, taken place. All of this is untrue, except the regret; and this is felt merely because he fears it may operate detrimentally to his own future interest. But, in sober truth, he did expect all this, when he promised, just as it has resulted; and he has prepared his excuses, during the interval, knowing beforehand that he should need them.—His object was to secure the business. This he accomplished. But did he preserve his Integrity? No: that he sacrificed when he laid his plan, at the outset; and he has done it again and again, while he has been fabricating his excuses. Along with integrity, also, he has made shipwreck of Truth and a good conscience.

Yet this man, though habitually practicing in such a

manner, has no idea that, in point of *integrity of heart*, and consequently of all *moral principle*, he ranks, in the estimation of God, on the same level with thieves and pick-pockets. Yet such is undoubtedly the fact. The man, whoever he may be, that makes promises in order to answer a sinister purpose, which he knows, or even fears within himself, he shall not fulfill, exactly in time and manner, according to the terms expressed or implied, is not an honest man. It is possible that, in other respects, his conduct may be moral, and even exemplary; still, by pursuing such a course, he gives proof that his heart is *destitute of the principle of Integrity*; and, consequently, that he is not honest. A sufficiently powerful temptation may lead such a man, hereafter, to show a destitution of moral principle, such as neither he nor his acquaintances ever expected him to exhibit.

And here I will make one remark, which is of universal application, in relation to our secular business.—Let a person, in view of any contemplated pursuit or undertaking whatever, enter his closet, and there, on his knees, attempt to ask God to bless him with prosperity, and give success to his purpose. If he cannot do this, with a good conscience, he may feel assured, that his purpose has not the sanction of Integrity. However desirable it may be to him to accomplish his purpose—however good the thing itself may be—yet, if he cannot, with a good conscience, in the immediate presence of God, knowing what are the means and measures he de-

signs to adopt for its accomplishment, bow down, and ask Him to bless and prosper him, in using them, he may depend upon it, that Integrity of principle is not in his heart. It is not a principle so capable of accommodation, that it can be used in one instance, and laid aside in another. It is observed in all the conduct of the man who possesses it. And the man who does possess it, has also the spirit of Christ. It regulates all his conduct, according to the laws of Christ. But if a man habitually deviates from its dictates—if the rule, which regulates him in buying, does not equally regulate him in selling, although he justifies his conduct by the maxims of the world, or by the conduct of others, or in any other way, he is destitute of Integrity—he has not the spirit of Christ; and, consequently, he is not His disciple, nor an adopted child of God.

I will now consider the Integrity of a Christian, in his

Covenanting with God.—It would seem that many professors, when they unite with a Church, consider their confession of faith, and their covenant with God, as being little more than a formal passport, an empty ceremony, which *they must pass through*, in order to be admitted into the Church. Their lives, at least to a great extent, indicate this, and hence it is, that they are so much reproached and ridiculed by the scoffing world. As the case is with them, “What do ye more than others?” is a question, that they cannot easily answer.—

But it would not be so, if they understood, and were properly mindful of, those vows and obligations, which they took upon themselves, in the solemn act of covenanting with God. In covenanting with God, what does a Christian engage to do? He engages universally, to take the Scriptures as the rule of his obedience in life; and, "by the grace of God assisting him," to live in conformity to what they require. The grace of God is ever ready to assist professors, if they are willing to be assisted, *in the performance of their duty.*

This engagement recognizes as binding, every precept, injunction and prohibition, which is of a moral nature, and of general application, in the whole Law and Gospel—as they are explained, by the example of Christ, and his Apostles. It is the most solemn and important transaction that a man ever performs.

"Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" This, truly, is a very comprehensive injunction. It is often repeated in the blessing, which christian professors ask over their ordinary meals. They have engaged to live according to this precept, and they thus repeatedly pray to be enabled to do so. But yet, how generally do some professors of religion forget the true character of this command! If it is a fact that a professor lives from day to day, without having this duty in his thoughts—or, if he only thinks of it in a transient manner, but just long enough to forget it—or, if he habitually neglects to

search the Scriptures, and thus lives in ignorance of what the glory of God requires of him, is he honest towards God? Is he sincere? Did he make this covenant with integrity of heart? And if not, what is his character? Let us try this, by applying the principle to a familiar case. You enter into a written agreement with a man to labor for you. He engages to labor, with a single view to promote your interest; and you engage to pay him for it. If he neglects your business, or takes no pains to learn what will promote your interest; or if, instead of laboring for you, he devotes his time and exertions to promote his own interest, exclusively, how would you look upon him? as a man of Integrity? Would you not, ever after, consider him as unworthy to be trusted? The reply need not be given. It is self-evident. As many professors live, is it at all strange that they do not know that they are adopted children of God? In the Christian's covenant, he engages to dedicate *himself, and all that he has*, to the service and glory of God. He *glorifies God*, when he cordially obeys His commandments. Now, suppose he is called on, in some emergency of the church, to give twenty dollars to some of its benevolent objects, and he has it, and can bestow it, even without *denying himself any one comfort*, if, instead of the sum needed, he gives two dollars, or five, or it may be, fifty cents; is he honest in the fulfilment of his covenant engagements? God has put it in

his power to do it all, and not injure himself, or his family. Peradventure, the call is in behalf of a *distressed* brother or sister, of his own church, with whom he has often communed, and renewed his covenant at his Lord's table. Does he fulfill his engagements, *in any sense*? It is in vain to pretend that he does.

Suppose I have a friend, living a few miles distant, in an adjoining town, and I, or some of my family, have occasion, from time to time, to visit that town, and sometimes need temporary accommodation there. My friend says to me, of his own accord, "Whenever you, or any of your family, have occasion, make my house your home, as freely as if it were your own. I shall be pleased if you will do so." By and bye, my son visits that town, and calls on my friend, under circumstances to require food and lodging. My friend treats him with common civility; enquires about his welfare; and says he is glad to see him; but offers him neither food nor lodging; and, when he rises to depart, he does not invite him to stay and lodge with him—but *civilly* bids him a "Good night." Now, if he had been honest and sincere in his invitations and professions, what would his conduct have been, in these circumstances, towards my son? Would it have been such as it was? How then, I ask, ought his professions to me to be esteemed? The good sense of every person will give the answer. Men will, one and all, pronounce him a hollow-hearted hypocrite. What, then, must be thought of a wealthy

professor of religion, when a poor brother or sister of the church comes to him, in deep distress, and want—having suffered losses till he is destitute—if he says, “I am sorry for your losses, and sympathize with you, in your afflictions,” but gives him little, according to his means; or, perhaps, nothing but kind words—and suffers him to pass on? His covenant with God requires him to do much more than this. This poor brother is one of God’s children, whom his Heavenly Father has sent to his house to receive such accommodations as his exigencies require. God has *furnished him* with the necessary means of relieving his destitute brother. Yet all *his* “love is in word and in tongue.” His true character is described in the following passage:—

“Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” It is also described in this: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace—be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit?” This case is put by the Holy Spirit, to prove the sincerity of *your profession* of faith. For it is immediately added—“Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone.” In this place it may be well to ask, How much of the faith of *professed* Christians, according to this rule, is “*living faith*?” If a christian professor really

loves God, he will show it in acts of beneficence and kindness towards the children of God, when they call on him. He will consider that God sends them, in His providence, that he may have opportunity to show his love to Him, by acts of kindness and charity to His children. This real Christians will love to do, in proportion to their means ; and one of the first emotions they will feel, on such an occasion, will be gratitude to God, for sending His needy children *to them*, rather than somewhere else—as they would feel towards a friend, whom they highly esteemed, for directing one of his children to call at their houses, instead of sending him to an inn, or to some other family. In principle, for aught that I can see, the two cases are similar. And, if they excite different emotions, there must be a radical cause for it. This cause is the subject of our inquiry ; and, when discovered, it will clearly exhibit the state of the heart, as respects its Integrity towards God. If a man loves God, he loves Him as He is “manifested in the flesh,” in the example of the man Christ Jesus. If he loves HIM, he loves His children, *because they are His*. He loves them as the disciples of Christ ; and he loves them as the children of his best friend ; and he will show that he loves them, by doing for them, so far as it is in his power, those things which he knows will be agreeable to their Heavenly Father. If, then, he professes to love God, and treats his sons and daughters, when they call on him, with neglect, and coldness, what does it evince respect-

ing his professed regard for him? Here, reader, you may try your Integrity, in relation to your covenant with God. Make the examination with fidelity. Consider what your *habitual conduct* is, and what are your feelings, when such calls are made upon you. Do you *readily* think, in yourself, in a manner somewhat like this?—"God has sent this person to me, to make a trial of my disposition; to make proof of my sincerity. I have publicly declared before men, that I love God. If I do, I shall love His children also. He has now sent to my doors one of His poor children, in want of such things as I possess in abundance. This abundance God has given to me. He now calls upon me to give a part to this needy brother of mine, if I am what I have professed to be. He has told me, that "he that loveth God, will love his brother also." I am now put to the proof." What, then, are your feelings? Are you sorry for the call? or are you thankful that God has given *you* the opportunity to show, and prove your love for him, by shewing kindness to his poor child? Here, your love of the world, and of God, will stand opposed. If you love God, you will *cheerfully* meet the call, and *perform your duty* with pleasure. But if not, although you may be afraid to do nothing, and *may do something*, to save appearances, yet it will be but a little, compared to his wants, or your ability. A feeling of regret will be perceived lurking in your heart, which will render the performance unpleasant to you. You will be sorry

he did not call somewhere else ; and, very possibly, you may say to him, as he thanks you, and departs, "Now you see what I have given you, and you must not call again for some time. You must go to such, and such, and such families, before you come here again." If I had not witnessed this, in several instances, I could hardly have believed that professors of the religion of Christ *could thus* betray themselves.

See, reader, whether, *on such occasions, your feelings and conduct* are of this character. If so, you may soon determine whose child you are.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to say any thing more on this point. But, as professors of religion are, sometimes, competitors for political promotion ; and, as *political integrity*, appears to hang much more loosely about men, than integrity in pecuniary transactions ; and, as it is thought by many, not to be composed of *precisely the same principles*, I am unwilling to pass to the next chapter without devoting a page or two to the consideration of this virtue.

In political strife, many men, who, in other situations, sustain a fair character, for integrity, and uprightness, conduct, as if they thought they were not strictly bound by the same rules of moral obligation, which they are governed by, in the common concerns of life. If they can impede, or prevent, the success of a competitor ; or advance their own interest by insinuations, and surmises, which transcend the bounds of strict veracity,

they seem many times, to resort to them without much compunction of conscience. But I know of no dispensation, in favor of a lax morality, in political strife, by which a departure from *perfect* integrity can be excused. That which is *morally* wrong, cannot be *politically* right. If one man defrauds another of his property, by a cunning artifice, or by any manner of circumvention, all men unite in pronouncing him a dishonest man. But why is it not as *truly dishonest*, for one man to defraud another of his good name, or of any other possession, as of his property? The dearest property that any man possesses, is his reputation; and one cannot rob another, in any manner, that will effect him more injuriously, than by defamation. This can be, not only attempted, but effected, by means that will not expose the slanderer to the penalty of the civil law. There are many such cases, which the civil law cannot reach. But the Law of God, searching the purposes of the heart, and taking strict cognizance of them, *can* reach, yea, and *does reach*, and condemn every purpose of this kind, secret or avowed, successful or abortive; and God will punish those who conceive such purposes, as persons, who are destitute of a *principle of Integrity*. Even the *forming* of such a design, indicates a false and dishonest heart, as truly, and as decisively, as prosecuting it to its result, after it has been formed. That seed only bears good fruit, which takes root in a "*good and honest heart.*" It may be very safely affirmed; indeed, I think it not difficult to prove,

indisputably, that there never was a cunning, and intriguing politician, who was *strictly honest*; and, if such a man is not *strictly honest*, he is not possessed of integrity at all, in his heart.

The principle of Integrity, may be viewed, as a fountain; and all the purposes, and actions of men, as streams flowing from it. Each of the streams, therefore, has the same nature which the fountain possesses. Whether it be in Politics, or Commerce, or Religion, or in any department of human conduct, of which duplicity or integrity are predicable, the *moral state of the heart* will give the true moral character to every action. Integrity and intrigue, abide not together, in the same heart. An artful Diplomatist, or Politician, who accomplishes his purpose by cunning and duplicity, however much he may be applauded by his partizans, his friends, and his country; and however highly he may be extolled by others, for his skill and ingenuity as a Statesman, will stand confounded and condemned, as a man of impure morality, at that tribunal, where actions are approved and condemned, according to their motives; where light is never put for darkness; and where good and evil are never confounded.

It is an increasing fashion of this age, and most of all, in this nation, to pronounce any man of exalted talents and achievements in public life, especially if he has rendered some essential *service* to his country, a good man, when he has finished his course, and gone to his retri-

bution. Unmingled felicity is awarded to him in the future world, by the popular breath of his partial countrymen, who never think of consulting that unaccommodating standard of moral character, according to which the eternal allotments of the great and the small will be alike determined. If a man has been popular in the government, and observed a *decent external* morality towards the public, whether he believes or denies Divine Revelation; whether he worships twenty gods or no god; whether he is faithful to his marriage covenant, or incontinent—it seems to make but little difference, in the award of glories rendered him on his decease. By an admiring multitude, who take little pains to discriminate between greatness and excellence, he is canonized, and exalted to an elevated seat, among prophets and apostles, in the kingdom of God. We seem to forget that what is highly esteemed among men, is often an abomination in the sight of God. There is too much reason to fear, that some “great men,” who have been *wafted* upwards to the abodes of the *truly* good, by the breath of Eulogists, may, hereafter, be found unchangeably fixed in that region, where the “rich man” urgently, but in vain, implored a small favor—small indeed, at the hand of the once despised Lazarus. So loose appear to be the prevailing sentiments of our countrymen, respecting what constitutes true Integrity and worth of character. But Eternity will effectually correct every error of human judgment.

I have mentioned several particular cases, in which Integrity *will be manifested*, if it exists in the heart, and is carried out in practice, in our intercourse with man, and with God. In some of these, the trial may be thought to be severe, and too minutely discriminating. If I do not mistake, however, in a case of such vital importance—where men are so liable to be deceived—and where they have so many temptations to judge too favorably of themselves—the trial should be as discriminating as possible. In a case of small importance, it would not be equally essential. But, where the salvation of the soul is depending, the line between right and wrong, truth and error, cannot be too clearly drawn.—Such is this case. If a man has not an abiding principle of Integrity in his heart, he may be sure that he has no one christian grace whatever; and, consequently, that he is not a child of God, but an alien. The cases I have mentioned, are only given as specimens. A man who has the principle in his heart, will show it, *habitually*, in all his conduct. God requires “*Truth in the inward parts.*”

CHA F.X

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

The spirit of Christ has taught him, who possesses it, that this is an important duty. It is a christian grace, which he will keep in exercise, with a vigor and con-

stancy, in proportion as he is influenced by that spirit. It is presumed, that but little need be said to prove that it is a duty to watch against Sin. A person, who is agitating the question respecting himself, which is the subject of this essay, will need no proof. He will feel it to be his duty, and one of infinite importance, to his own eternal welfare. Still, I will advance sufficient. Every careful reader of the Gospel, will remember the direction which our Saviour gave His disciples—"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." It is enjoined as a duty, in the parable of the ten virgins: also, in what Christ says, as an inference from the parable of the man taking a journey into a far country, when he delivered the talents to his servants; and in what he said, "This know, if the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken open," &c. If every professed believer of the Gospel was as faithful in performing the duty, as he is *convinced that it is a duty*, enjoined by the Lord Jesus Christ, there would be a much more prevailing *upright* walk among Christians, than is now seen in the world.

The reasons for performing this duty are almost countless. And the motives, which urge Christians to fidelity in its discharge, are more weighty and important than can be easily expressed. Among them I will name a few.

The Christian is liable to be assailed by temptations, to commit sin, through all his senses. His imagination is an avenue, by which temptation is ever ready to enter; and does often enter, even before he is aware of his danger. His passions and appetites are all in readiness for the attack; and are predisposed to yield, *without resistance*. His heart is deceitful, and prone to sin.— He has some one easily besetting sin, or more, against which he needs a constant and strong guard. He is surrounded by temptations on every side. The great adversary of his peace, his soul, and his salvation, is ever changing forms of allurements. Sinners, his companions, are continually enticing him to “walk in the path of the wicked, and to go in the way with evil men.” In short, the fact, which every real Christian knows, in his own daily experience, that the life of a child of God, from the time of his being “born of the spirit,” is a constant, incessant, *perpetual* warfare, of the principle of holiness, “striving against sin;” and the consequences incurred by his suffering a defeat in this contest, furnish reasons sufficient, were there no others. But those consequences furnish the powerful motives referred to; and urge to fidelity and constancy, in performing the duty of watching against sin, upon every christian professor. Some of the most important of these, only, will be mentioned. But these will be sufficient for my present object.

The first is—He *feels* that, by yielding to temptation,

and committing sin, he will dishonor and offend God. Before he was "born again," he had no right knowledge of either God or sin. As an holy being, he neither knew, loved or cared for God's honor or pleasure. The most that he desired, respecting God, was to escape His anger, by some means or other, after death. As to any regard for His honor and glory—any true desire to enjoy His presence and favor; or any wish to please Him, in this life, by obeying His law—it was all out of his thoughts—totally disregarded. Consequently, he had no right knowledge of sin. Sin, in his estimation, was confined to a very small circle of actions; consisting of but a *few open immoralities*—offences against common decency, and invasions of the rights of others; but rarely, if ever, as affecting God, or His government. As he had been guilty of but few of these—and as he had done many *good things*; since God was very merciful, he trusted that *his sins* would be treated with favor; and would be easily pardoned. But since he was regenerated by the Holy Spirit, all this error, (as he now sees it was) has been, in some degree, corrected. His existing views of God, as an infinitely holy and pure being, cause him to have some correct knowledge of sin, as offensive, yea, utterly odious to God; and infinitely provoking and dishonorable to Him. And, since by regeneration, he has begun to desire and to value the favor of God, a fear of provoking and dishon-

oring Him, becomes a strong motive to watch against sin.

Another motive is—That, by sinning, he brings dishonor on Christ, and reproach on His religion. He has learned to realize the importance of his own salvation, and also to desire that of others; both because Christ will be glorified by it, and they will be saved from infinite suffering, and be rendered infinitely happy, by embracing the religion of Christ. But by sinning, professors tend to prejudice others against religion—turn them more obstinately against Christ; and promote, so far, their endless destruction.

Another motive is—By sinning, he grieves the hearts of Christians, and gives their enemies (sinners) cause for exulting—for scoffing at religion; at religious people; and at the Church generally. He knows that thus he grieves his best friends.

Another motive to watch against sin is—That, by sinning, he loses the pleasures of a good conscience; brings guilt on his own soul; incurs the displeasure of God; causes the Spirit to withdraw His consolations from him; involves himself in darkness; then he fears to approach God by prayer—in short, he blots out his hope, as to present evidences; destroys all his religious comfort; and throws himself into the power of his greatest, most malignant and subtle enemy. To any Christian, who has once had this bitter experience, of yielding to temptation, and sinful backsliding, and knows

his sufferings, contrasted by his preceding consolations ; and when to those are added the accusations of an awakened conscience ; the reality of his guilt and danger ; “ the wrath of God ” renewedly “ revealed against him ; ” and “ the terrors of the Lord assailing him, strengthened and aggravated by his ingratitude and increased guilt ; this becomes a powerful motive to watch against sin ; especially, after, by deep repentance, he is pardoned, and restored to a good conscience and a good hope. The infinite goodness, and compassion of God, manifested in granting him renewed repentance, forgiveness, peace of conscience, and comfort, and a new hope, furnish him no inducement “ to continue in sin, that grace may, *still more*, abound.” But on the contrary, these very considerations, when presented to his mind, though they are realized by him, cause his grief to increase, and his tears to flow afresh. The very thought, that he has thus abused *such goodness and compassion*, embitters his sorrow, and deepens his grief, by shewing him the blackness of his ingratitude. Thus convinced of his own weakness and of his constant need of divine aid, the conviction will bring him *oftener* on his knees, and make him more earnest, and urgent, in prayer, *for strength to resist temptation* ; that he may be led away from, and delivered out of it, during the rest of his life. It will induce him to avoid those scenes, to withdraw from those places, and shun that society, which will expose him to fall into sin. He will feel the importance

and value, of that petition, "Lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil." Feeling the truth of that inspired proverb, "He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool," he will set a constant watch on that deceitful, and treacherous, enemy to his peace and salvation. To all this, the Spirit of Christ will influence him. Yea, more. It will make him watchful over his tongue. Knowing the unruliness of that little member—how prone he is to indulge it, in speaking evil of others ; especially, if they have injured him—how prone men are, to "take up an evil report against their neighbor ;" to go up and down, as tale-bearers, among the people ;" he will strive to watch his tongue, and "hold his mouth as with a bridle," lest he, too, speak evil of others ; and thus sin against God.

The grace of Christian Watchfulness against sin, which is imbibed, in a greater or less degree, by every one, who has the spirit of Christ, will render him cautious about exposing himself to be ensnared, when he is about to visit places of public resort, for business, or for any other purpose. It may be useful to mention a few such occasions, and but few ; since these will easily indicate many others. Elections ; public Trainings, and Reviews ; Celebrations of Independence ; and such others, as call together a concourse of people of a mixed character.—Now, if a Christian contemplates attending such scenes, and exhibitions, he may, and if faithful, will, consider before hand, that he will, probably, be exposed to com-

mit sin; and that in the presence of such as will not be sorry to see it; and that he will thus, bring guilt on his own soul; and dishonor, on his Saviour, and his religion. If he has a spirit of watchfulness in exercise, his first step will be to pray for divine help, to keep him watchful while on the spot; and to preserve him from falling. He will not, unnecessarily, or rashly, go to such places. And if he does go, he will be careful about the associates he mingles with. He will, some times at least, think, "How would Christ conduct if he were now present?" "and how should I conduct, if I now saw him here, bodily?" He will watch against tempting others, to take licence to sin, from his example. And the thicker, and the more urgent, the temptations gather, and present themselves, the more vigilant will he become, and the more anxious to have the time arrive, when he may take his departure, and retire to a place of greater safety.

This, reader, is a plain case; one with which you probably, are familiar. How do *you* generally conduct in reference to it? What are your leading thoughts, feelings, and reflections, on such occasions? The Spirit of Christ, having made you conscious, in some measure, of your own weakness, will influence you to be watchful against going, *unnecessarily*, into danger—and, while there, to lift up your heart in prayer to God, to guard, and preserve you, from falling into temptation; and this, for such reasons as I have just mentioned.—

Here, again, you may try yourself. Remember the enquiry is not, whether you have done it in a single instance; or in two, or three, instances—but what is your *general practice*, on such occasions?

CHAP. XII.

LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN.

I mention this as a Grace of the Christian, distinct from benevolence, which has already been considered; because it is a distinct affection, and is so considered in the bible; although it has somewhat in common with it.—This is that love, which our Lord spake of, when he said, “A new commandment, I give unto you. That ye love one another.” It is generally, called “a love of complacency;” that which one christian is required to see, *and manifest*, for another, *as a christian*; and because he belongs to Christ. There is not a duty enjoined on christians, more frequently, more solemnly, and more explicitly required, in the New Testament, than this. Our Lord, on the occasion referred to, in the last quotation, adds—“Even as I have loved you, that ye love one another.” Here, he refers them *directly*, to his own example.

The love that any person feels for any object, he *always manifests*, in some way or other. This, I think, will not be questioned. A husband loves his wife; and he always shows it in his conduct. A lover loves his mis-

ness, whom he intends to marry. What is his conduct? Does he not seek for every possible opportunity to make her sensible of it, by his affectionate treatment of her? A man loves his friend. Does he shew this by inattention, and neglect—or by a formal, cold, distant deportment, when he comes into his presence? It is sufficient only, to state the enquiry. Every person who has ever loved another;—yea, who is not a misanthrope, knows to what conduct love prompts towards the object beloved. Now, we have only to designate the object, which we are required to *thus* love, and think of him; and our feelings will immediately inform us, what is our true character in this particular. Does a man ever think of an absent friend, without having his affection excited, with a corresponding wish that he could see him, and with him reciprocate an interchange of affectionate expressions, and kind offices? This is the language, *the very life*, of love; and, whenever it exists, it does as naturally, and necessarily, tend to, and produce, such results, as an affection for a child, induces a parent to seek its welfare. “By this *shall all men know* that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another,” is the declaration of Our Blessed Lord. He did not contemplate, when he said thus, that his disciples would be at a loss, themselves, to know whether they were, or were not his disciples. The fact is taken for granted, that they would *be assured, themselves*, by this feeling; and he declares that, in the manifestation of the love, which they felt for

their brethren, all men should *see and know*, that they were his disciples. You live in the midst of a society, composed, promiscuously, of christian professors, and those who make no pretension to religion. How do you *habitually feel* respecting them? Do you realize *any* difference? Suppose your own beloved brothers, and sisters, thus settled around you, in a society of others who are not your kindred. How do you feel, when you think of *them*, compared with the latter? This will prove you. Though benevolence, which you possess, if you are a christian, will cause you to feel *kindly towards all*, and induce you to *desire* their happiness; yet it will not cause you to feel, as your love for your brothers, and sisters, and their families, will, to feel *towards them*. And this you will evince, by your conduct, habitually.— Are there not some of your christian brethren and sisters, living at a short distance, (have they not so lived for years,) with whom you meet in the house of that God, whom you both call your Father; and occasionally, sit with you, at the table of Him, whom you both call your Lord and Saviour, whom you scarcely know by name, or by sight? To whom you have rarely, or perhaps, never, spoken? and who, if they, or their families, were sick, or in distress, you would hardly know it, unless announced from the pulpit, by a public request for prayers in their behalf? Suppose they casually call at your house; does your heart meet them with *any peculiar pleasure*, although you know the relation which they bear? Perhaps you

will reply, "I am not acquainted with them. I do not know their characters, whether they deserve my *peculiar affection*, and esteem." I ask, then, how it comes to pass, *that you do not know them, and understand what is their character?* Would you not have visited your own brother, or sister, within the same distance, during the time? Perhaps you may reply, "they are poor, and do not associate with the circle of *my friends and acquaintances.*" You may *feel* it, if a regard for consistency prevents your *speaking thus.* But the fact that they are poor, presents a peculiar reason *why you should* have become acquainted with them, and learned their character. "The spirit of Christ," if you had it, would have influenced you to this very thing; because it did so influence him. It was the very object that induced him to leave heaven, and come to this world. It was his *constant employment*, while in this world. It is that which he enjoins as an unceasing duty, on all his disciples; it is what they, *who really love him, will do;* and it is that, by doing which, they will have evidence themselves, and will make others to know, that they are his disciples.— "Hereby do we know, that we have passed from death to life, *because we love the brethren.*" "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love, one for another." Why do you *doubt* whether you love the brethren, in this special manner? Do husbands and wives *doubt*, whether they love each other? Do broth-

ers and sisters *doubt* whether they love each other? The affection in all these instances, is a *special* one; distinct from benevolence. They *know it*, because they *feel it*; and it always shows its existence, by their treatment of each other. They know it *by feeling*; and others know it by their conduct. Why do not professing christians *know* that they are christians? Why are they continually *doubting about it*? The answer, (and distressing indeed, it is,) forces itself upon us—*It is because they do not love the brethren*—because they *have not* love one for another; and therefore, they do not show it to others, by performing these works which *love always produces*, for the objects of their love. Love, which you are not sensible of feeling, and which you do not shew by habitual kindness to the persons loved, when you have opportunity to do so, *does not exist. It is not.*

Since the duty of exercising christian complacency, is one in which professing christians are, it is to be feared, more delinquent, unfaithful, and faulty, than any other, that is specially enjoined, I will proceed still farther, in my remarks upon it.

Many persons, after they have publicly professed their faith in Christ, and united with a local church, if we may judge by their conduct, appear to feel, as though *their whole work was done*; as if their business, as christians, was accomplished. They can now, go forth, mingle with the world, and attend to their own concerns; and feel, and know, and exhibit, *no difference*, in their ordi-

nary affections, between the world at large, and their professed brethren. How does this correspond with their christian profession? They *profess to believe* that they have been regenerated—"born of the spirit of God"—that, by this new birth, they were partakers of the spirit of Christ; which is love—and especially, love for him, and for his disciples; because they themselves, do love him. They profess to feel a *special love for them*, on the principle of relationship; they being their brethren; children of their own "Father in heaven." This is the love of complacency. All who are real christians, do feel this special love, in some degree, for their brethren; and they cannot *feel* it, without *knowing* it themselves; and, in particular circumstances, in which their brethren *may be placed*, this love will become active, and be manifested in the conduct of all who feel it. Thus it *will appear* to the observation of others. I have said that he who *feels* this affection, *knows it*. Does any one question this assertion? Let him remember, that love, for *any object*, is not a sleeping, inactive, dead affection. Whoever loves another, knows, whenever he thinks of him, that his love always attends the thought, and goes forth from his heart, towards the person he loves. This position is confirmed by every christian's experience; and the word of God amply sustains it.—The Apostle Paul says, "But as touching *brotherly love ye need not* that I write unto you; for *ye yourselves*, are taught of God, to love one another." St. Peter says,

“love the brotherhood.” “This is the message, that ye love one another,” saith John.

Again he says, “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.” “This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning. That we should love one another. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” To show that this is a peculiar affection, (that is, brotherly love,) I will quote one more passage, where it is proved by the contrary. “He that hateth his brother is a murderer.” I might multiply quotations abundantly, to prove that the word of God establishes the position, that this special love of the brethren, is an exercise of the spirit of Christ; and that it is both felt, and *manifested*, by all true christians, for their professed brethren. But these are sufficient; and no real christian will deny it. Does he not feel a different affection for the child of his own father, from what he does, for the child of another man? And, is he not conscious of the fact? Does he not *know* that it is so? And why does he know it? The answer, and the only answer, is *because he feels it*. If the affection exists, does a difference in the person, for whom it is felt, make any difference in the evidence of its existence? If I love my friend, am I not *as sure* that I love him, as I am that I love the child of my own parents? If not, I ask why? And is it not the same precisely, if I love my christian brother? If I do not *know* that I love him, is not the

fact *proved to a demonstration, that I do not love him?* Since then, it is the declaration of God, and since that declaration is confirmed by the *experience of every real christian*—and that, *habitually*; is it not proof absolute, that professors of religion, who are in doubt whether they feel this brotherly love, for others, have it not? And does not this *prove*, that “they have not the spirit of Christ; and, consequently, are none of his?” I will now state the case differently; for it is of two much importance to this enquiry, to be passed over slightly. I wish I could make every professor feel its importance, as he ought to feel it.

I have an highly valued friend, residing in the western part of New York, or in any other remote settlement. I live in Connecticut. That friend has conferred many, and great favors on me. He has a family of children; and one of them, though *personally a stranger to me*, comes into my neighborhood. I hear of it, and am informed where he lodges. Feeling towards my friend, as I do, what conduct will that affection for him *naturally* induce me to pursue, in relation *to his child*? Will it not impel me to go, at once, and find his child, invite him to my house, and there to entertain him *with all the kindness*, and hospitality, in my power? And shall I not do this for his father's sake, and because he is *his child*—the child of my much valued friend, who has conferred so many kindnesses upon me? If I do not do thus; or, if pretending to do it, I do it *grudgingly*; regretting that I am requir-

ed to do it ; will it not be evident that I *do not* love my distant friend, as I profess to love him ? *That I do not feel* the obligations, which I pretend to feel, and, in fact, that I am none other than a vile hypocrite ?

Now, Reader, make the case your own. View the Lord Jesus Christ, as this absent friend. To him you are under every conceivable obligation. Then consider professing christians, as his children ; members of his family. Though strangers to you, personally, yet they casually come into your neighborhood, and you know the fact, and also, where they lodge. Look at your conduct, and *that will tell you* what is the state of your heart, relative to Christ himself.

Suppose you have relatives, whom you never saw.—Suppose these come from a distance, into your vicinity, and you have been informed that they have arrived. In this case, knowing the fact, that they are your own relatives ; what will it induce you to do, respecting them ? It is sufficient to state the case. If you were under circumstances, such as would enable you to entertain, and accommodate them, conveniently ; if you did not go to them ; introduce yourself ; become acquainted with them ; enquire after their welfare ; *invite them to your dwelling*, and bid them welcome to your best hospitality ; every body would say, and say truly, that you valued the expense, more than your relatives—and, at all events, that your esteem, and affection for them, were very small indeed, and extremely cold ; so much so, that they

would doubt whether they existed. Again, I ask, what relative, in this world, is so near, and should be so dear to you, in one respect, as your christian brethren? And how are they, in truth, according to your *existing feelings*, towards them? What your feelings are, will be evinced, by your treatment of them. What is that treatment? In their sickness, (which it is supposed you know,) do you do any more than enquire, from time to time, as you occasionally see those, who you think can inform you, "how they do?" And do you not do thus respecting any, and every other person? If, in addition to being sick, they are poor, and need pecuniary aid, for their comfort, do you go nigh them and *proffer*, and *contribute*, that aid, as God has enabled you? Or do you excuse yourself, and stay away; lest you may be required to contribute? Brothely love has no connection—no fellowship, with the conduct implied in the last enquiry. And yet, how common, I had almost said, how *universal*, is it among professing christians. But, "thanks be to God," it is not *literally, universal*; although it is so general, so nearly universal, that those professors of religion, who act in real consistency with their christian profession, appear to many, to be singular, and *unnecessarily* solicitous about their poor neighbors.

I do not say that all professing christians, who thus neglect their christian brethren, are hypocrites. I sincerely hope that it is otherwise with very many of them. But I do assert, without fear of contradiction, two things,

respecting them all. First, that their love for their brethren is very faint, and cold—and inconsistent with what they profess—and, Secondly, that, feeling, and conducting thus, they are not in a condition to find any *comforting evidence*, that they are the children of God.—They neither obey the commandments of Christ, nor imitate his example.

CHAP. XIII.

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

In this particular, I do not intend to speak of the whole of a christian's intercourse with his fellow men. Such is, I well know, sometimes, the comprehensive import of the term conversation, in the word of God. But I will *now* speak of it, in the common restricted meaning of the term, which is in constant use among men; as it is usually understood, to mean verbal communication with our fellow-creatures, in our ordinary intercourse with them.

The tongue, though a small, is an unruly member; and, as it is under the prime-moving influence of the heart, which is both deceitful, and desperately wicked, it requires to be curbed, watched, and held in with a strong bridle, lest it "set on fire the course of nature." "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," and the conversation of *every man*, will be characterized,

generally, according to the feeling, or *predominating* disposition, of his heart. The natural disposition of man, is unholy—consequently, he will take no pleasure in holy conversation; and the more holy and spiritual it is, the more undesirable will it be to him. *His* conversation will not partake of it, at all, because the fountain, from which it proceeds, is unholy; and the stream will possess the same nature with its fountain. And the heart of the christian, “being sanctified but in part,” will be but too prone to manifest its impure remains, in his conversation among men. But my purpose is to show to what *kind* of conversation, generally, the spirit of Christ, which is possessed by every christian, will naturally influence, or prompt, him to observe, in a variety of situations in which he may be placed, in his progress through life. The injunction of Christ, as indicated by the Holy Ghost, and recorded by the Apostle Paul, is brief; but it summarily comprehends the whole of that conduct, which the spirit of Christ will influence the living, watchful, and conscientious christian, to practice, and make manifest, in all the variety of his intercourse, both with the world of sinners, and also, with christians.

The rule is “Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

First, then, How does, or will, the conversation of a christian, “become the gospel of Christ,” among thoughtless, and impenitent sinners? Not by profaneness, coarse vulgarity, obscenity, levity, double entendre, or evil

speaking, of any kind. For all this will bring reproach on the religion he professes ; and openly dishonor his Lord and Saviour. All this, therefore, he will habitually avoid. And, that he may not be betrayed into it, he will as much as may be, shun those places, scenes, and occasions, where he might be in danger of yielding to the many temptations, which are constantly, and thickly, placed in ambush around him ; to cause him to be taken by surprise, and, to fall under their power. If he is relating the conversation of others, in which impiety or profane words are to be repeated, to give the narrative *literally* ; he will not, for the sake of exciting merriment and laughter, in his audience, repeat the *impious* or *profane language* ; and excuse himself by saying, “I am only repeating what was spoken by another.” O, how often is this done by professing christians ! Is such conversation any where authorised by the precept, or the example of Christ himself ? Then, surely, such conversation does not become the gospel of Christ. It is directly opposed to it ; and dishonorable to both.

Again. He will not quote, and repeat the scriptures, for the purpose of giving eclat to a jest ; or to heighten the effect of a pun, or a repartee. He will remember, that “the third commandment requires an holy and reverend use of God’s name, titles, attributes, ordinances, *word*, and *works*”—and that, “It forbids all profaning, or abusing of *any thing*, whereby God maketh himself known.” His conversation, if it is not even spiritual,

and heavenly, will be serious and sober ; though, at the same time, it will be cheerful.

Enough, I trust, has been said in these few remarks, to indicate what it will be in numerous other particular cases, when it is influenced by the spirit of Christ. The christian will look to the gospel, for both the precepts, and the example of Christ ; and as these both uniformly, and without one exception, became the gospel, so they will form his standing rule, by which he will habitually regulate his conversation, when in the presence of sinners.

Secondly. What will it be in the society of professing christians, in order that it may be, as it becometh the gospel of Christ ? Here the christian is supposed to be with his own brothers, and sisters ; members of the same family ; all of whom, if they are not mere professors, *have*, and are supposed *to feel*, a common interest in the welfare of the whole household ; a deep and mutual concern for its prosperity. And, *feeling thus*, what will they naturally converse about ?

To answer this enquiry, let me suppose a case, which has often occurred in our country. Suppose a number of families are about to remove from their present residence to a distant settlement, where they calculate to reside the remainder of their lives. They have never been to the place ; but they have read an account of it, which is furnished by one who has been there. They have heard of others who have gone there, and have been personally acquainted with some of them. They

have heard and read much about the road ; its difficulties ; its dangers, and its accommodations. They know not precisely, when they are to set out on their journey ; but they are convinced of one important fact ; that they will be called for, to go soon, by one who has been there, who has engaged to come, and accompany them, to guide them in the right way, so that they shall not take the wrong path, and get lost. They know that his presence with them on their journey, is indispensable for their protection, and safety. He has informed them, that he will call for them, but, could not inform them of the particular day when—but to guard them against all danger of not being prepared, he has told them, that they must be in *constant readiness*—because he can admit of no delay, when he calls for them ; and, that they *must then leave* their present dwelling, whether they are ready or not, because the place where they now live, is not theirs—it has passed into the possession of another, and they cannot possibly remain there any longer. He also, assures them, that, if they are ready to go, when he calls, he will conduct them safely, to a much better home, which is already prepared for them, if they have every thing in readiness to depart when he calls for them.—That they may be sure to be wholly prepared, he also, has informed them, that they will fail of the settlement, if they are not thus ready ; and in that case they will be hopelessly lost in a vast wilderness. This, then, is the situation of these neighbors ; *these friends* ; who are ex-

pecting to emigrate shortly to their new settlement.— They are only waiting to be called for, by their Protector and Guide.

Now, I ask, what will *naturally* be the leading subject of their thoughts, their conversation, and their enquiries, whenever they meet each other? (And will they not *often* meet together.) Will it not be, their contemplated Removal? Will they not, *mutually*, enquire of each other, as to their respective readiness to go, when their guide calls for them? Will they not converse about the nature of their contemplated new settlement? Its inhabitants? what kind of neighbors they are to have? what is the kind of society that lives there? Will they not, *naturally*, enquire of each other, whether they have any *new* intelligence, relating to the country? whether they have heard of any others who are preparing to move, and settle there? and, if so, what sort of characters they are? Will they not enquire of one another, what is the kind of government in the place? what are the employments, the amusements, and, in general, the *customs* of the inhabitants? Will not the subject of their own removal, in some particular or other, *be introduced by them*, whenever they meet each other, in their ordinary employments of making preparation; and, more especially, in their neighborly, social and friendly visits?

Suppose then, that they all met a day or two ago, and spent a whole evening together, and not one word about

their removal was mentioned—not one enquiry was made about their preparation—nor was the subject even once alluded to. On reflection, would they not think it very strange? But suppose they met often, and the subject was rarely, if ever mentioned; and not one question asked about their own individual preparation for the journey. Reader, what would be the conclusion, that would *force itself* on the mind of any and every one, on learning these facts? Would it not be, that those neighbors, who had given notice that they expected to move soon, to another and a distant settlement, either did not believe what they said—or that they expected it would be a long time before their guide would call for them—or that they did not *feel* as if *any preparation* was necessary, notwithstanding all they pretended? Would not all who saw them be convinced, by their conduct, that they would much rather *remain where they are*, than remove; although they continually complained of the many troubles and difficulties they constantly met with; and although they uniformly pretended that they were to go to a place where none of these troubles would attend them—but where every thing, in that settlement, would conspire to make them perfectly happy forever, after they arrived there? Need the answer be written?

Now, the Spirit of Christ *naturally tends* to make Christians speak to one another often, when they meet, *about their journey to where Christ has gone before*

them, to prepare a residence for them all, so soon as they are in readiness to remove to it, *just as naturally*, as the expectation of a number of neighbors, who are calculating to move to a new and distant settlement in this world, does, to speak to each other about their removal. Their treasure is in the new settlement; their affections are there—and *their conversation will be very much about it*, and every thing appertaining to it: the journey—the necessary preparation for it—the company they may have on the road—the society they expect to find there—in short, every thing, any wise connected with it, will be uppermost with those who are really expecting, *soon*, to enter on their journey. Similar to this will be the conduct and conversation of Christians, when they meet together, *if they feel persuaded* that they will soon be called for, by their guide and protector, on their way. Is it not so?

Now, just look at the fact, reader, as it respects yourself; and as it is presented in the conversation and conduct of others. What do you—what do professed Christians, generally, yea, uniformly converse about, when they meet together? “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” And you will think and converse about your treasure, whether it be in heaven, or on earth.

The simile needs no illustration. And if the reader has not made an application of it already, the writer is persuaded that it is beyond his power to aid him,

by any additional observations he could offer for his assistance.

When Christians awake to their own interests, they will *know* that they are Children of God.

PART III.

GENERAL REMARKS, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PRECEDING.

Having taken notice of those particular christian graces which I have deemed necessary ; and having mentioned some of the effects that will result from the influence of the Spirit (the disposition) of Christ, which they who are regenerated partake of, in the habitual practice of those graces—I will now remark, That I do not pretend that I have mentioned all the graces of the Christian. I did not intend it ; nor do I think it necessary, for the purpose I have in view.

I will here make one general observation, that applies, *universally*, to all the christian graces, when Christians keep them in exercise, in the performance of their christian duty—That the Spirit of Christ inclines every one who has it, or begets in him a *desire* to keep all the commandments of God. This was the ^{ea} desire, and the uniform practice of Christ himself. He kept them all, and failed not in one instance. The same disposition in another man, so far as he possesses it, will produce the same effect. Jesus Christ, as a man.

“made under the law,” was actuated, in His whole conduct, by a supreme love for God. All His real disciples are, in a degree, actuated by the same motive.—This it was that induced Him to keep all God’s commandments. It will incline each of His real disciples, to strive for and habitually aim at the same *perfect obedience*. According to the measure in which they possess it, they will show its influence, in the practice of all the christian graces. Thus the Psalmist says, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments.” With a disposition to keep all the commandments of God, David would never be at a loss whether he was a child of God, or whether he was, according to His covenant, entitled to His favor and blessing. The evidence of both, in these circumstances, would be clear, conclusive and abiding.

“Blessed are the *undefiled* in the way, who *walk in the law of the Lord*. Blessed are they that *keep His testimonies*, and that seek Him with their *whole heart*. “They also do no iniquity. They walk in His ways.” The persons, here characterized, are blessed. How? With what? With doubts, as to their title to, and enjoyment of the favor of God? With constant, corroding fears, that they are not His children? That they are about to be rejected, disappointed in all their hopes, and cast away forever? No. So sure as God is true, and faithful to keep His word, and to fulfil His promises, such are not the fears of those who “have a respect

unto all God's commandments; and who, from a Supreme Love for Him, habitually *aim at perfectly keeping them*. Such fears are the portion of those "who say unto Christ, Lord, Lord, but do not the things which He says"—do not keep, nor aim to keep His commandments, any further than they think necessary, to be decently consistent in the sight of their fellow men, and to lull to repose a reproving conscience. But they are blessed with His favor—with His *manifested* presence—with "the light of His reconciled countenance shining upon them"—with "joy and peace in believing"—with that good Hope through grace, which, as an anchor to their souls, will sustain them, "sure and stedfast," through all their trials in life; and a strong confidence, when presenting themselves before Him, with the spirit of adoption, and crying unto Him "Abba Father."

Again, that holy man says, "I esteem *all thy precepts, concerning all things*, to be right; and *I hate every false way*." The way in which the Psalmist walked, was that way which he loved. It was that which was pointed out in the precepts of God. It respected "*all of His precepts*," without one exception. Walking in that way was his daily business; the steady, habitual course of his life. He pursued it, because he loved it. This only he esteemed to be right; and he felt it to be congenial with his prevailing desire, to go *steadily forward* in it. Consequently, he hated and carefully turn-

ed from every other way. Was He, while impelled by such a disposition to walk in the way of all the commandments of God, and to hate and turn from whatever would allure him away from it, at a loss whether he walked in the way that pleased God? Was he at a loss about what it was that did please Him? Why not? Because he did not single out some one or two *easy duties to do*, which God commanded; and calculate, by performing *them* faithfully, to please God. But it was because he had a respect unto, and a regard for all His commandments—all of which he esteemed to be right, and equally his duty to obey; although they required many great and constant sacrifices, and much self-denial.

The declaration of our Lord, justifies and confirms this construction of the Psalmist's views and feelings.—He says, “Then are ye my disciples indeed, *if ye do whatsoever things I command you.*” And again—“He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me.” To every one, possessing this character, God has promised to manifest himself in a peculiar manner—to abide with him, and to love him, as his child, with a father's love. For thus our Lord continues—“And he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.”—Now, let it be remembered, that these promises, of such inestimable value, are not made to him who *has* the commandments of Christ, (the Bible) in his possession, or who merely reads them, (with whatever diligence he

may) if he does not *keep*, that is, *obey them*—but to him who acquaints himself with them—meditates on them—commits them to memory—treasures them up in his heart, as the whole rule of his duty; all of which he desires to obey, and aims to do it continually, *because he loves them*.

The Lord Jesus proceeds farther, and declares, “If a man *love me, he will keep my commandments*.” And He sharply rebukes the slothful, hypocritical professors, because they continually “called Him Lord, Lord,” and totally neglected to do what He commanded them.

Addressing some, of that character, who then stood in his presence—(and thus he addresses all of a similar character in every age, and every where)—he says to them, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” That is, “To what end, for what purpose, with what object in view, do you call me your Lord, and Saviour, whilst you *hear my directions*, and totally neglect to *obey me*? What do you hope to obtain from me? What benefit do you expect to derive from me? Those, and those only, who have my commandments, and obey them, are my disciples. Those only, *will I acknowledge as mine*, in the day of Judgment—at the time when you will cry, “Lord, Lord, open unto us, after the door is shut”—and, at the time when I will say unto you, “I know you not.” “You never obeyed me. You had my commandments, but you did not obey them. Therefore depart from me, ye hypocrites. Although

you called me your Lord and Master, and covenanted solemnly, to obey me, yet you neglected me entirely, and voluntarily chose another master, whose service you loved better—and him you served, and obeyed. Now, therefore, look to him for your reward. I acknowledge no such disciples.” Such, I apprehend, is a correct paraphrase of the passage. That they were *professors of religion*, whom he will thus address, is indisputable, from their own reply. They say to him, “we have eat, and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” “We have attended public worship in the house of God; we have professed to be thy disciples, and we have sat at thy table with thy people, and with them, partaken of the consecrated emblems, of thy body and blood; and we really hoped thou wouldst receive us to dwell with thee, and thy people, at this awful time.” Listen to the reply. “I know all this and admit it all. But you never obeyed my commandments. You wholly disregarded them, and paid no respect to my authority; but acted, *in all that you did*, with reference to your own personal benefit, entirely. I know you not. Therefore, depart from me, and take your portion with other hypocrites, and unbelievers. You are fitted for no other place—and there is none other prepared for you.”—In the same chapter from which I have quoted the above, the true and false professors, or disciples of Christ, are shown by contrast. The true, are such as hear his sayings, and do, (i. e. obey) them—and the false—those

who hear them, and do them not—(i. e. disregard, or disobey them.) There is a passage in the 3d Chapter of the I. Epistle of John, where this subject is taken up, argumentatively. It shows, clearly, when christians “may have *confidence* towards God”—(that they are his adopted children,) and is so perfectly conclusive on the enquiry I am answering, that I will quote it. It appears to be such a perfect demonstration, as leaves no room for any one to doubt about himself, if he will honestly try himself by it. I will first give the Apostle’s words, and then show his argument, *in its connection*.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But, whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And *hereby we know* that we are of the truth, and shall *assure our hearts before him*. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keep-

eth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him : and hereby *we know* that he abideth in us, *by the spirit which he hath given us.*"

The Apostle's argument seems to be this—Christ has given us a commandment, that we should love one another, even as he has loved us.

We see how he has loved us, in the fact that he laid down his own life for us. Here we see, both the strength, and the extent, of his love for us. *He laid down his own life for us.*

This shows that he requires that we should be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren, if it is evidently necessary. It is evident that Christ may, in his providence, require even this at our hands.

We do *profess* that we love Christ.

He says to us, "If ye do indeed, love me, ye *will keep my commandments*. Ye will be willing "*to do whatsoever I command you.*" And, consequently, we shall love the brethren, *even as he has loved us*. Now, professing, as we do, to love him, as he loved us ; in the same manner, and to the same extent ; if we see any brother in need of any thing that we have, if we let him depart, or send him away, without supplying his wants, we are not *possessed* of that love for Christ, which we have *professed* that we have. But, instead of that, we are utterly destitute of it. Our conduct *proves* us destitute of it.

Remembering this, then, let us not love in *profession only*, and content ourselves with that. But let us *show*

that our *professed* love for Christ *is a reality*, by obeying His commandments—by loving “*in deed, and in truth.*”

If we do thus, we shall have confidence towards God. If we thus act, honestly and with a good conscience, “the Spirit of God will witness, with our spirits, that we are God’s children.”

Examine yourselves, then, carefully, and with fidelity; and ascertain whether you do thus live, show your love, and keep the commandments of Christ; and, that your conscience *truly* testifies to this. For if it does not, but reproves you, and convicts you of any *allowed unfaithfulness*, then your heart condemns you—and “God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things,” will certainly condemn you, also.

Now, if you find, in this examination of your *heart* and *conduct*, that your conscience approves, then you will have confidence towards God; and, in this confidence, you may ask Him for *any thing that is for your good*, and *He will bestow it*; because He will grant every thing that is for the good of His children, in answer to their prayers, when they do those things which please Him.

Now remember, His commandment to which I refer, is, “That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, *and love one another.*”

If we do, *in truth*, keep this commandment, which

comprehends the whole rule of our duty, "He dwelleth in us, and we in Him."

How shall we know, then, that God dwells in us, and we in Him? and thus have confidence towards Him?

I answer—

By the Spirit that He has given us, to love Him, and to love the brethren, as He loved us; "not in words, nor in tongue only; BUT IN DEED, AND IN TRUTH." That is, by a real, strong, prevailing, and an *ungrudging* desire to do them good, *at all times*, as opportunities are furnished us. That we do possess this desire, or disposition, we shall both *know ourselves, and make known to others, by actually doing it to them*, with a cheerful obedience to the declared will of Christ.

Such, then, is the argument, which the Holy Ghost has set before Christian professors, for them to examine themselves by, to enable them to determine the important question, Whether they are in truth what they profess to be—and such is the conclusion to which the argument clearly leads the enquirer, that, if he will be faithful to his own soul, in this examination, he cannot fail of ascertaining what is his true character, in relation to God—whether he is, or is not one of His adopted children.

It has been no part of my design, in this Essay, to point out how much, or how little evidence of grace in his heart a man must have, in order to his *actually being a child of God*. For this, I apprehend, no man is com-

petent. If it should be admitted that a man may really be a child of God, with so little evidence of his having been adopted into His family, "that he is, all his lifetime, subjected to bondage, through fear of death," it must, also, be admitted, that it is a most undesirable condition to be in. Living thus, he neither honors God, nor enjoys His special presence and consolations, in this world. He is like a child in a state of exile from his father's presence—although not actually cast off, and utterly rejected; yet so much the object of his displeasure that he will not suffer him to *appear* in his presence.

If any one is a child of God, in such a condition, he is only in the first remove from an alien. He neither feels the affection, nor enjoys the privileges of a child. Whereas, on the contrary, whoever is a child of God, *should possess evidence of it*. It is his duty, and it is his privilege. If he does not, it is his own fault. He forsakes his own mercies. Possessing evidence that he is an adopted child of God, he ought to be raised far above the petty troubles, cares and anxieties of this life; and, also, the fear of Death.

It is not improbable to my mind, that there are such persons, and that their number is not small, who are the children of God; and to whom evidence of their relation, *sufficient to convince them of its reality*, has been presented before them, but they have not received the benefit of it, for the two following reasons:

1st, Because they have not been faithful to learn

what is the true scriptural evidence, which God has given, that they may try themselves by it—and

2d, Because they give heed to, and place too much confidence in, what boastful zealots say and confidently affirm, concerning themselves, viz: “that they have great and clear light *in their souls*; that their hearts are often *full of the love of God, even to overflowing*; that they are *continually enjoying* the light of God’s countenance; that they are sure that God loves them;” and other declarations of a similar character—pronounced with great assurance, and accompanied with a spirit, of which *Humility* forms so small a part that it is not even discernable.

Now, if these bewildered children of God would feel persuaded, that *such is not the language of His children*; and that *such is not the evidence* of their adoption, which God generally vouchsafes to give to His children, of only ordinary attainments in a life of holiness—and that *it is no evidence at all*, except just so far as it is sanctioned by His *revealed word*—they would cease to adopt it as a *standard*, by which to try and judge themselves; and, consequently, would be preserved from many doubts and fears, respecting themselves. When Christians adopt a standard, by which to try themselves, other than that which God has given them, they will always find themselves in perplexity. They will “walk in darkness, and see no true light,” because their eyes are not directed to, and fixed on the “Sun of Rigeous-

ness," from whom alone they can behold it. It is "in His light," and His only, "that they can see light." His light shines in His revelation.

In this discussion, it has not been my design to state what are the *internal evidences* of grace, in the hearts of the children of God, with which they are favored, in those seasons when He indulges them with "communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.— That Christians, "who walk in the truth, and are led by the Spirit," are favored with such, I think the word of God fully authorizes us to believe. But what is their precise and definite character, I do not know that we are informed, in such a manner as will justify any person for attempting to describe it. Indeed, I believe it is not in the power of one Christian to describe them, in such terms as will clearly convey a definite view of them, to the apprehension of another. It appears to me that, in this particular, "God giveth to each of His children, as He will;" and that these dispensations of His grace He never intended should be taken as a rule *by others*, by which to determine their own characters.

The method I have chosen and endeavored to pursue, for answering the interesting and highly important question, proposed in this Essay, is, so far as I am informed, different from any other that has been published hitherto. If any work has been published, on this plan, I have not seen it. I have attempted to show, by

the sure evidence of the Word of God, how persons, who have had saving grace communicated to them, by the Holy Spirit, in His work of Regeneration, will, under its influence, feel and conduct, in a number of specified cases; and these, adapted to different circumstances, in which it will impel them to act. In prosecuting this subject, I have not taken my own experience or conduct, to constitute *any part* of the *rule*, which I have attempted to place before the reader. I have intended to take my rule *wholly* from the Word of God. It has been my object, that every inference which I have drawn from the premises stated, should be fairly drawn; and a necessary consequence of those premises. I have not sought for ornament in style, nor for rhetorical embellishment. I have, on the contrary, endeavored to place important truth before the reader, in plain and simple language; easy to be understood by the most common capacity. How I have succeeded, is submitted to my readers to determine.

If the Christian's Profession means *any thing at all*, surely it means all that the language implies, in which it is expressed. If it implies that which has been mentioned in this little work, it is not merely a thing of form—a passport from the thoughtless world, into the visible Church of Christ. It is more—yea, much more than this.

Every real Christian is an adopted child of God.—By His grace he has “received the spirit of adoption.”

This spirit influences him to love the compassionate God, who has adopted him for His child. The love he *feels* for God, makes him desirous to *show* it in obeying His commandments.

In his Public Profession of religion, he declares to the world, and in the presence of many witnesses, That he does love God, and is actuated by *this desire* to obey Him. Thus he, impliedly, invites them to watch him, *and judge of his character by his conduct.*

In his Covenant with God and the Church, he does, in the most solemn manner, absolutely promise to *show that he loves God*, by habitually acting conformably to the Rule of obedience, which God has given him, in the Bible. He engages to receive that rule, as his supreme law; and endeavors to regulate his conduct, according to all its requirements.

The natural influence of "the spirit of adoption," is, to lead him away from a spirit of "worldly-mindedness;" to detach his affections from this world, and to elevate them to God, and fasten them on Him, as the Most worthy Object of his love and gratitude; and the Centre of all his affections, hope and confidence. Such is the *natural* tendency of the spirit of adoption. These things being admitted, a Christian professor *is justly expected, by the world*, and his brethren also, to live in a *manifest* conformity to what he has thus publicly professed and promised. If a professor of religion really knows what he does, when he makes his profession pub-

lic; if he comprehends what he *engages with God, to observe and perform*, when he subscribes his Covenant with the Church; if he is really honest and sincere, in these most solemn transactions—he certainly will live, so far, in a conformity to them, at least, as to make it *evident to others that he is sincere in making them*.—But if, on the contrary, his object is to unite with a church, on the spur of some impulse, more or less sudden—or, if he does it for some *undefined reason, which he has never clearly comprehended himself*, and could not make another person understand; thinking, perhaps, that, for some cause or other, (he knows not what) it will be better for him to stand *thus* connected with the church, than to hold no ostensible connection with it; hoping, as many appear to, that he will be more likely to have God bestow on him the blessing of regeneration *within the church* than without—and, that he may escape from suffering the pains of hell, in such a way of proceeding, when he would not otherwise—if, for reasons of this kind, he offers himself to unite in a church relation; makes a public profession; and takes upon him the Covenant required by the church, merely as a formality, necessary for his admission—if, I say, he does all this, for becoming a visible church member—having gone through the requisite forms, he has then accomplished his object. This was, from the first, solely to “join the church;” and it was nothing more. In this case, he betrays his utter ignorance of himself; of the nature of the

solemn transaction; of his awful delusion; of the aggravated wickedness of his conduct, in the sight of God; and he realizes not that he is treasuring up wrath unto himself, by his vile hypocrisy, instead of making his salvation more probable. Were he truly conscious of the real nature of his motives, and the moral character of his conduct, in what he contemplates, just as God estimates them—sooner he would have a millstone fastened to his neck, and be cast into the sea, *than he would consummate his purpose*. And it is not impossible that all this may be done—nay, it is *more than probable that it has all been done*, and in many instances, by persons who were influenced by no higher or holier motives than those just mentioned.—The object which such a professor contemplates, in all this transaction, is his own personal good; *exclusively*.—He has no regard for the honor and glory of God, in what he does. Those enter not into his views—they form no part of his calculation. His heart is unrenewed; and consequently, he feels no solicitude respecting these. The object he exclusively looks at, is *security against suffering* in the world beyond the grave.

Knowing that by indulging himself in open, and gross immorality, he will expose himself to the censure, and discipline of the church; he may probably, live in such a manner as to avoid these; (and this, *in the present age, and condition of the churches' watchfulness*, seems to require no peculiar vigilance, or self-denial;) and thus he

may pass along, *tranquilly*, on his way to perdition. His love of this world remains, as it was before he professed religion; because his heart remains unregenerated; unsanctified; and altogether in sin; while he may be, and probably is, congratulating himself, that he has done *his part*;—*all that he can do*, for “making his calling and election sure”—that, in doing this, he has placed himself in the way of a blessing; and laid God *under some obligation* to bestow it upon him; and if he does not bestow it, and he finally perishes, after all that he has done, the fault will not be his; but it will be because God, for some *unknown cause*, would not accept the offering he has made Him. “He is in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity,” and knows it not. His heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. “His eyes are blinded by the god of this world,” to whom he renders all his devotions. The humbling, self-denying doctrines of Christ, form no part of *his religion*; and the sacrifices they require him to make, constitute no part of his *practical* obedience. The measure of his obedience, instead of being the moral law of God, is *the conduct of other professors*. *His religion is all in profession*.—Hence he will continue to live very much as he did before uniting with the church—perhaps *sinning a little more decently*, and with rather more circumspection.

Can *such* a professor of religion “let his light shine before men?” Then may *darkness* eclipse the sun, with its own *superior brightness*. As soon shall the

earth become bright with the splendours of midnight. Before he can cause *his* light to shine, he must possess it. All the light he has is darkness ; and verily, it is the darkness of spiritual death. What then, will *his obedience* be? Just that which, in ordinary circumstances, would be rendered by a moral sinner, in a state of impenitence. And that, and no more, he does render.

If, in the providence of God, he is exempted from severe trials, he may pass on, *and go through life*, with the reputation of being a child of God ; and when he dies, his mourning relatives may comfort themselves, with a hope that he has gone into possession of that “rest that remaineth for the people of God.” All of this is grounded, only, on the fact, that he made *a profession of religion* ; and that he lived without indulging in open immorality—free from flagitious wickedness ; and not at all, because his light shone. It did not shine, for he had it not.

But let *such a professor* be addressed with an application for a *liberal donation of money*, to promote the honor of his acknowledged Lord ; and to extend the blessings of the gospel to the ignorant, destitute, and perishing of his fellow men. If avarice is his besetting sin, it will *then appear* what is the real state of his heart. His sincerity will then be put to the proof ; and it will certainly be found wanting. His idol is in danger, and he guards it with care.

True, in his covenant with God, when “ he joined the

church," he solemnly promised to dedicate himself, his property, and all that he possessed, to the honor of God. He is now brought to the trial of his sincerity. What is his promise worth? His conduct will here demonstrate, that *he did not mean his money, in that engagement.* That, as being too valuable to part with, he intended to have excluded from the conditions of his covenant? and, like Naaman, he is ready to offer up the prayer, "*In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant.*" His object, in joining with the visible people of God, was not to "honor Him *with his substance.*" No *such thing* entered his thoughts, when he did it. He merely passed through a prescribed form, which was necessary for him, that he might take a station in the church. His object, in doing this, was some selfish good, he hoped to achieve, by means of it, which he despaired of attaining by other means. Nothing more. His character, in the sight of God, is similar to those of Annanias and Saphira. Hitherto he has only "lied unto God."

I have, in this essay, stated the following particulars, which I now bring together, that the reader may see them all presented for his inspection, at a single view. For my authority, I have taken the declaration of the Holy Spirit, delivered to us by the inspired Apostle Paul; That, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

I have stated, that no man possesses the spirit of Christ, unless he is regenerated—"Born of the spirit of

God." I have then proceeded to show, as I believe, in conformity to the authority of Divine truth, how those, who, by regeneration, have received the spirit of Christ into their hearts, being actuated by its influence, will feel and conduct, in life. I have said, that such persons are Christians, and none others. That they will be humble and meek. That they will possess a spirit of Self-Denial; of Benevolence; of Forbearance and Long Suffering; of Forgiveness of Injuries; of Weanedness from the World; of Gratitude to God; of Integrity; of Charity; of Fear of God; of Prayer; of Watchfulness against Sin: and that they will regulate their conversation among men, so that it shall become the gospel of Christ.

I have endeavored to show that every one, who possesses these, which are "fruits of the Spirit," and prominent among the Christian graces, will, of necessity, habitually regulate his life, so far in conformity to them, that it will be manifest to others that "he has been with Jesus;" and that it will be apparent to himself and others that he is a real disciple of Christ, because he is influenced by His spirit. Following this course, it brings me to this conclusion, according to the sure testimony of God's word; That, persons *thus feeling* and *thus living, habitually*, will, not only evince to others, but possess within themselves, *certain evidence* that they are Adopted Children of God.

If I have effected my object, and if my conclusion is correct, then one incontrovertible inference from it is,

That those, who do not thus feel and thus live, not transiently and occasionally, but habitually—neither give any evidence to others, nor possess any within themselves, that they are the children of God. It is much to be feared, that there are not a few people, who have been trained up from their childhood under the light of the gospel, and have received a correct *doctrinal* education, from their Christian parents; who assent, readily, to the proposition that the Bible is a revelation from God to man; and, particularly, to the scriptural correctness of all the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, usually called “the Doctrines of Grace:” but who, nevertheless, are not Christians. They, not having been “born again,” are destitute of that indispensable characteristic to a child of God. Many such persons have lived what is called “unexceptionable *moral* lives.” Their characters are free from reproach.—They are sober, punctual and regular attendants on the public worship of God; and, to human observation, are exemplary members of society.

Such people, having a tender conscience in relation to several christian duties; and feeling generally impressed with the importance of being possessed of *personal religion*, are accustomed to agitate the question relative to themselves, whether they are christians or not. Although they are not conscious of recollecting any thing

of that *peculiar evidence* of awakening, conviction of sin, and of a great and decisive change in their religious views, and feelings, of which they have heard, and read much, as these are said to have been experienced by others; and as they have been mentioned, generally, in the early part of this essay; yet, perhaps, they are praying people; and do not remember the time when they were not seriously inclined—and are conscious of having uniformly revered the institutions of religion—and always have felt an esteem for ministers of the gospel; although they cannot recollect, nor discover, any of those strongly marked and special evidences, of having experienced that great change, so much talked about—by christians. But yet, recollecting that it is often said, that the evidence of regeneration, is not uniform, nor equally manifest in all cases; and that, in some instances, it is said to be *gradual*; and though effectual, is not so marked, as to indicate, with certainty, any particular day, or week, or perhaps, year, within which it took place—they begin to enquire whether they do not find, in all those favorable views of their own characters, (just mentioned,) sufficient evidence of their being christians, to justify them in making a public profession of religion, and entering into a covenant relation with a Church. Having gone thus far, it is no difficult labor to persuade themselves, that they do; because, for obvious reasons, they *wish to find* such evidence. They persuade themselves, it is now “their duty to go forward.”

They offer themselves. Nothing is objected, or can be, with propriety, against their moral, or religious characters. They are accepted ; received, on their public profession, into the visible church ; and take upon themselves the most solemn covenant that man ever makes here upon earth. All this, it is highly probable, is done, and often done by persons *who have no correct view, nor just conception*, of the nature of the solemn transaction ; nor right understanding of what is implied, comprehended, and assumed, in their covenant with God ; but little, if any, more than children of six years old.

The truth, respecting such people, seems to be, that, in all their investigations of this question, respecting their christian character, they have fixed their attention on the wrong object. They have made their own fitness to unite with the church, the great subject of their investigations, and researches ; and have been trying themselves by the apparent goodness, and conduct, of professors—and not at all, whether they love God, in all his character, as that is exhibited in the bible ; and whether they love, approve of, trust, and embrace, Jesus Christ, as the Saviour entirely suited, and adapted, to their necessities, as great, self-destroyed, helpless sinners, who are already condemned to perish :—and whether they do embrace him cordially, and thankfully ; and are willing to *do* and *suffer*, any thing for him, which he may rightfully require of them. Theirs seems to be the religion of the self-approving Pharisee ; and not to partake of the

meeke, humble, self-denying religion of Jesus Christ, which inclines *their hearts to imitate Him*, in labours, and sacrifices, for doing good, as they have opportunity, unto all men;—friends, and enemies; the poor and the rich, alike. Though they may “live soberly,” and, according to their standard, “righteously,” yet, to live “Godly, in this present evil world,” they take little heed; and, in what it consists, appear to have taken but little pains to inform themselves.

It may be well to repeat, in this place, that the spirit of Christ does not incline men to think *how good they are, essentially, or comparatively*; that they are as good as this professor; and some what better than that. Self-righteousness only, does this.

Such was not the effect of the spirit of Christ on St. Paul. He, while in his unconverted state, possessed as much of *this sort of religion* as any of those of whom I have been speaking. But when he became a partaker of the spirit of Christ, its influence was manifested in a *conduct and conversation*, directly opposed to all this. “To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,” was then characteristic of *his view of himself*; and a fair specimen of his language, when speaking of himself, as a christian.

Such an effect as Paul manifested, the spirit of Christ produces, in a proportionate degree, in every person who has it abiding in his heart. How different this, from

thinking, and concluding, "that I am as good as this, and a little (perhaps a good deal) better than that professor?" The former is the fruit of the spirit of Christ. The latter, of the self-approving Pharisee.

Why do such people doubt whether they are christians? I answer; *because they wish to find evidence in themselves*, of that which they do not possess. They willingly believe that it is somewhere, lurking in a hidden manner, in them. The difficulty *with them* seems to be, *not that they do not possess it*; But that they cannot find it, by reason of *not knowing how to search for it, aright*. They need not be in doubt one hour, if they would faithfully try themselves by the word of God—compare their *motives*, and their *habitual conduct*, with its requirements—if they would examine *honestly*, and *judge themselves impartially*. They might, *and they would*, at once, perceive that they do not possess one *distinctive mark* of being disciples of Christ. This might render them susceptible of a true conviction of their real character, and condition; and lead them to renounce their half-hoping, and half-fearing, confidence; and bring them to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, with the broken and contrite spirit, of the humble publican. And thus, they might become christians in deed.

It is not an uncommon occurrence that we hear individuals, when speaking of themselves, say thus: "O, if I only could have the faith of assurance, I should rest contented, and be perfectly happy." When I hear such

remarks, I must confess, I cannot but pity the people who make them. Not for their want of "the faith of assurance," so much as the extreme ignorance they evince, of the *nature* of that religion, which they have professed; the real religion of the gospel.

The object, embraced in their desire to possess the "faith of assurance," I apprehend, is an *assurance that they would be secure from suffering the pains and endless torments*, which are denounced as the certain portion of the impenitent, in hell. That "the faith of assurance" would effectually relieve them, from every distressing apprehension, arising from that source, I am fully prepared to believe. That it would lead them, ultimately, to the possession of perfect happiness, is so clearly established in the word of God, that it would be presumptuous to doubt. But *their* happiness in this life, which would result from its possession, would not consist principally, in, nor be derived from, what seems to be most prominent in their minds, viz.: deliverance from suffering in hell—but from loving, seeing, and holding communion with God, in Jesus Christ, perfectly; without end, intermission, or abatement; and in holding intimate communion with Him; and possessing, and enjoying His love, in incessant, ever new, and ever increasing, expressions of it, without end.

That having the faith of assurance, would enable them to *rest satisfied and contented*, while in this world, I must be permitted to doubt. It might, if their religion

was productive of no other desire than an escape from suffering the torments of the damned. But, if I am not deceived, the religion of the gospel, enlarged, enlivened, and animated, as it would be, in those who had attained to that *most desirable* confidence, would prompt its possessors to a proportionate zeal, and anxiety, to have others become partakers of its blessings, which would utterly forbid their sitting down, in a state of *rest, contentment, and perfect happiness*. If I do not misjudge, it would excite a train of feelings, and stimulate to a course of ardent, benevolent, persevering, and untiring exertions, directly the reverse of personal ease and satisfaction. It would produce *unequalled efforts* in trying to bring their perishing fellow men, to become partakers of the same inestimable blessings, of which they would have that happy assurance. Nor would these exertions and efforts, be remitted, nor terminated, but with life. For, so long as they saw *one* sinner, remaining under condemnation of the Divine law, and exposed to punishment, their benevolence, and compassion, would never suffer them to *sit down* contented, and perfectly happy. Thus, “the faith of assurance” wrought with Paul. Thus it wrought with many of his contemporary fellow-laborers. And thus, in similar circumstances, it would work now. And the church would then be in truth, “as a city set on an hill.”

I have thus noticed this very common remark, not because I disapprove of its desire. It is laudable; and

the object of it, invaluable. But I have noticed it, because I have thought the remark is often made, with mistaken views, and in contemplation of an object, which is not expressed; and also, because I wish to record a caution against an indulgence of that *selfish view of the religion of the gospel*, which appears to me, to be implied in the terms, as they are commonly used.

It is not improbable that there are some people, (and it may be that the number is not small,) who have had their feelings excited, *and even deeply exercised*, with a most distressing anxiety, about their salvation, during some period of awakening; who hitherto, remain unsatisfied, relative to the great question of their having closed with the gospel terms of salvation. I have been acquainted with several such. They were very anxious to solve the question, that is of such vast importance to them, and are most of all, anxious to be able to solve it, in such a manner, and with such conclusive evidence, as will remove all their uncertainty, and furnish them with an absolute assurance of having been adopted, as children of God. If they can only accomplish this most desirable object, it will remove all their fears of self-deception, and consequent apprehensions respecting their endless condition after death. The confidence they feel, in the final perseverance, and salvation of *every one* that has been once adopted into the family of God, would leave no room for them to indulge in doubts, relative to their own ultimate safety; if they can find sure evidence

that they have been once adopted as children of God.— This is certainly, a most desirable achievement, when it can be obtained. To such, the title of this small work may be attractive. Probably, it will be.

It is also, very probable, if any *such* persons hereafter, read this essay, they will close it, less quieted in their minds, and farther removed from possessing that evidence, they *wish to find* in their own favor, than they were, before they began to peruse it. If they are on the whole, believing they have formerly closed with the gospel conditions of adoption, and were then adopted—and are only doubting now, because they do not understand what constitutes sure evidence of adoption; and that, so soon as they can learn what that evidence is, they will certainly find it furnishing an assurance to themselves; it is more than probable, that they will be sorely disappointed, and have their hope powerfully shaken.

If the rule, for determining this question, which is assumed in this essay, is correct, according to the divine standard; I fear it may destroy the *indulged hope* of more professors of religion, and of some who are not professors, than it will sanction, and confirm. Such persons should recollect that the object of the writer of this essay, is, to furnish evidence, according to an *infallible standard*, by which those, who are really children of God's adoption, may know that they stand towards God, in that blessed and happy relation. It never was any part of his design, to confirm *every individual*, who is indulging a

hope that he is a christian, in *his* hope ; whether it is well founded, or ill-founded, according to the standard which God has furnished. There is some reason to fear, that not a few are indulging a desire of this nature ; and that they are more anxious to be persuaded that *their* hope, which they are *now fondly cherishing, is a good hope*, than they are to learn its true character ; especially if it is unfounded, and unauthorized, according to the only true standard. If such is the fact, they *should* desire to learn it in season to renounce it, that they may secure a good hope, one which will *endure* the trial, and not fail them.

It was heretofore remarked, that some awakened, and anxious persons, seem to look, in the time of their distress under a conviction of sin, with far greater solicitude, after a hope for themselves, than for correct information, respecting what constitutes a good hope, which will not make them ashamed. They appear, (at least to me,) to act as if their great object—the end of all their anxiety, and distress, is to “*Obtain a Hope* ;” and if they can effect this, they *seem* to feel as if *their object* was achieved ; and *their work done*. Having “*Obtained a Hope*,” they are *then*, made sure of their salvation ; and they may, with tranquil composure, move steadily on their way through this world, much as they did, previous to their being awakened ; only, perhaps, a little more securely at their ease. What they do with their “*hope*,” I do not know. It appears, however, to be carefully

laid by, in some place of safety, that it may not slip away, clandestinely, while they themselves are "here, and there," like the centinel, represented by the disguised prophet who stood before Ahab, after he suffered Ben-hadad to escape. They appear to set an high value upon it, for the benefit they expect to reap from it, in some future time, when they may stand in need of its aid. Looking at their conduct; it may be rationally believed, that they keep their hope under lock and key, as carefully as if it was money.

Reader, if you are doing thus; if such was your object in seeking to "obtain a hope;" and if, having *obtained* it, you have been and are still conducting in that manner; if you do, only once in a while, go and look at your hope, to see if it remains where you stowed it away for safe keeping, you will be disappointed, if you are expecting to find *your existing hope confirmed*, by the evidence presented in this treatise. I do not recollect but one instance, in the New Testament, in which *such a hope*, is alluded to. That instance is mentioned, in the parable of the "ten virgins;" and *the hope* referred to, is that, which had been carefully preserved, in *the same manner*, by the "five virgins who were foolish." The time came, when they needed it. They sought for it. But it had eloped, and they could not find it again. It was gone. And why? Because it was that hope which is mentioned by Job; "the hope of the hyp-

ocrite," that could not be found when God called for his soul.

There is one way in which you may "obtain" a good hope, which will never disappoint you; and there is but one. That is, by exercising "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And you need not live one day more, without it, unless you choose to. There is one way, and but one, in which you may, always, have the consolations of that hope, to sustain, and cheer you, amid all your worldly trials, and adversity. Do you ask what way that is? I answer. Set God always before you. Make *His glory* your *chief object*; *His Interest* your *interest*. Make the advancement, and promotion of that, in this world, the great, *the all-commanding* business of your life. *Keep that constantly in your view*. Seek for His direction, how you may promote it, in your station, by earnest and *honest* prayer; by carefully studying his revelation; and by observing, conscientiously, the indications of his providential dispensations. Subordinate your own *private* worldly interests, and pursuit of gain, to it; and labor, steadily, and constantly, in His service: then your Hope, like the *Shekina* to the Israelites, will be ever in your view. It may be, at one time, as a cloud. Then it will protect you from harm, and guide you in safety in the heat and enterprizes of the day. At another time, it may be as a fire. It will then be a light, to point out

your way, and guide, and protect you, and keep you in safety, amid the darkness, and dangers of night. But, whether it be a cloud, or a fire, it will equally assure you of the constant presence of God *with you, and as your Almighty Friend*. Go, cheerfully, where God directs you to go. Do, cheerfully, what He bids you to do. Keep your hope constantly before you. Look, *not with alarm*, on "the great and terrible wilderness;" for God is with you, and will not forsake you, unless you make an idol of silver or gold, and worship that. If you will thus *constantly* devote yourself to His service, *He will take care that you do not want for food, or raiment, or "any good thing."* If your journey is long, and arduous, He will give you strength to go forward, and to *endure to the end*. If your enemies are numerous, and as formidable as the giant sons of Anak, they shall not prevail against you, nor overcome you; for He will fight your battles, and subdue all your enemies for you. And, when you come to the Jordan of Death, which you *must pass*, before you can enter on your possession in Canaan, the Ark of His Covenant will be with you. With you it will enter Jordan, and divide its waters; and you shall pass through in perfect safety, on dry ground. And when you enter Canaan, you will have no occasion to gird on your armor, and fight, as Israel formerly did, to obtain possession of their inheritance; for Jesus, who guided, protected and sustained you, in the wilderness; who provided for, conduct-

ed, and preserved you, through the whole journey, has utterly subdued the Canaanites, *your enemies*, and destroyed them out of the whole country. The moment, therefore, that you have passed over Jordan, and put your foot on the opposite shore, you will cease from all your conflicts and labor; and will enter into your Eternal Rest.

And now, reader, if you have travelled thus far on your journey, in this wilderness, although *nominally* one of the children of God; venturing, *feebly*, to hope that you are *really one of them*; and yet doubting about it, and fearing continually what may ultimately prove to be the fact—if you have *carefully* attended to the *rule of trial* herein set forth, and have *applied it*, in the several particulars, as you have advanced—it is not improbable that you have had your feeble hope weakened, rather than confirmed. If so, are you willing to proceed any farther in this wretched manner? Are you willing, for the sake of getting a few more acres—or for having a little more splendid house, furniture and equipage, than some others, to “walk in darkness” to the end of your journey, under a continual apprehension that you may not be admitted, at the end of it, into that “everlasting rest,” which is assured to every Child of God, when his term of service and toil on the earth shall be finished? Have you not experienced inquietude enough already, while pursuing your way thus far? Have you not been wounded often enough, by the bites of serpents in the

wilderness? and are you yet willing to hazard yourself among them to the end? Have you not drank, often enough, of the bitter waters of Marah, to be now willing to exchange them for the water which issues from the Rock in Horeb? Why then will you, *any longer*, attempt to “serve two masters?” You have the assurance of Him, whom you call *your* Saviour, that you *cannot* do it; and your own experience, thus far, has fully confirmed that declaration. You may be ready to enquire, “What would you have me to do? Must I exchange my employment in life; or be less industrious in prosecuting it?” Not at all. Neither of these would I suggest. Very far from it indeed. But I would have you change your Master. I would have you *fulfil your Covenant*, which you made with God, when you united with His professed people, in Church relation. I would have you *realize* that your covenant is something more than a *mere form*. Hitherto, you seem never to have done this; and, until you do, you will go on in this miserable condition, (the strong probability is) until you are called, by your acknowledged Lord and Master, to give an account of “the talents” He has entrusted to you, for improvement—and that you will then receive the reward, as you now have the character, of a slothful and unfaithful servant.

If you would avoid this—if you would have your path henceforward enlightened by the clear light of the “Sun of Righteousness,” shining upon it—if you are now sat-

ified with walking in darkness, where you could see no light—then *begin now, yes, even now, to realize* that your covenant with God demands of you, that you henceforth “consecrate yourself a living sacrifice to God,” and that you make HIS SERVICE *your business*, from this time forward. The indications of His Providence were never more clear and definite, than they are at this time. Then, when God calls on you to contribute of your substance, *freely*, to advance His kingdom in the world—if He has put it in your power to give ten dollars, you must not give fifty cents, or even half that sum, and pocket the remainder. And so with respect to every other duty : you must not do it by halves, or by tythes—but faithfully and entirely. Then you will know, (if thus you begin and “*follow on to know*”) without a remaining doubt, that you are one of the Children of God. Has not God promised all this to those who are faithful in their covenant engagements? And are you afraid to trust Him? Whoever “served God for nought?” And whoever “*trusted in Him*, and was confounded?” “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways.”

INDEX.

PART I.

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Introductory Essay on Experimental Religion | <i>Page</i> 5 |
|---|------------------|

PART II.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chap. 1. Awakening, Conviction of Sin and Regeneration. | 36 |
| Chap. 2. Humility. | 51 |
| Chap. 3. Self-Denial. | 57 |
| Chap. 4. Benevolence. | 67 |
| Chap. 5. Christian Forbearance. | 74 |
| Chap. 6. Forgiveness of Injuries. | 80 |
| Chap. 7. Weanedness from the World. | 91 |
| Chap. 8. Trust in God. | 97 |
| Chap. 9.* Prayer. | 111 |
| Chap. 10. Integrity. | 122 |
| Chap. 11.† Christian Watchfulness. | 146 |
| Chap. 12. Love for the Brethren. | 154 |
| Chap. 13. Christian Conversation. | 164 |

PART III.

| | |
|---|-----|
| General Remarks, illustrative of the preceding. | 173 |
|---|-----|

* By mistake, numbered X. in the volume.

† In a part of the impression, the figure I was removed accidentally.

ERRATA.

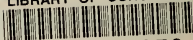
Page 13th second line from the top, for *distinct* countries, read *distant* countries. Page 40, end of bottom line, for *was*, read *saw*. Page 97, top line, dele *at*—4th line, for *text*, read *test*. Page 124, 2d paragraph, 6th line, for *excised*, read *exercised*.





BV
49

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 064 256 0